

SHORT FICTION

*A Critical Collection*

JACK LONDON      WILLIAM FAULKNER      ISAAC BABEL  
ANTON CHEKHOV      RING LARDNER      KATHERINE  
MANSFIELD      FLANNERY O'CONNOR      I B SINGER  
F SCOTT FITZGERALD      HEINRICH BOLL      LIAM  
O FLAHERTY      SARAH ORNE JEWETT      SHERWOOD  
ANDERSON      EDGAR ALLAN POE      SHOLOM ALEICHEM  
GUY DE MAUPASSANT      NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE  
KATHERINE ANNE PORTER      J F POWERS      FRANK  
O'CONNOR      D H LAWRENCE      HENRY JAMES      SEAN  
O'FAOLAIN      GUSTAVE FLAUBERT      JAMES JOYCE  
EUDORA WELTY      ERNEST HEMINGWAY      FRANZ KAFKA  
THOMAS MANN



# SHORT FICTION

## *A Critical Collection*

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# About this Book

Students often object to "tearing a story apart." Why, they ask, can't we just enjoy it? There is a good deal of sense to this question. Indeed, we can only deplore a response which lacks joy, spontaneity, and "innocence." And we would regret if these were lost while one is learning to read more analytically. But they need not be. Moreover, the analytical, that is, the more conscious reader discovers pleasure unknown to the casual reader.

As a matter of fact, every student knows that talking about a story heightens his interest and reveals things he had not noticed before. Students like the personal encounter, the stimulating trade in ideas—in the classroom as well as in the dormitory. Indeed, the student needs to be cautioned that analysis is a modest pursuit. At best it can only begin to articulate the complication and nuance of a story. And this is all we hope for our analyses, though we hope, too, that they will in some measure intensify consciousness, and stimulate as well as supplement talk.

Our plan is fairly evident from the table of contents. *Action*, *character*, *point of view*, *irony*, and *symbolism* are discussed in separate introductions, and each is applied in two analyses to suggest its range and modifications. Two groups of questions follow each analysis, the first inquiring further into the particular element treated, the second introducing other considerations such as style, setting, atmosphere, and the like. Twenty stories, arranged in their probable order of difficulty, are left free of both analyses and questions. We feel that most of the stories in a collection should be left untouched by the editors. Only in this way will the reader throw away the crutch of guidance, "murder" his critical father, and come to at least the beginnings of his own critical manhood. Our selection concludes with "Death in Venice," an introduction to the novellette, so closely connected with the short story. A masterpiece of our time, its style, density, irony, scope, allusiveness, and symbolic import provide

the teacher with a story that brilliantly unites the elements we have stressed as well as others he will have presented

Any plan is arbitrary. Ours was settled on when we found that an introduction and analysis focusing on one element (for example, symbolism) gave the student a sharper sense of it. This method might mislead the student into thinking that stories can be categorized, but class discussions in which a fuller analysis will naturally be forthcoming should make clear that all the elements in a story are bound together in one unified expression. Indeed, even in our focused analyses the student will see that we have inevitably brought in other elements.

Our stories were selected for a number of reasons. Except in a few instances, we have chosen *good* stories. For, although this collection is designed primarily to teach the student ways to approach fiction, it should also introduce him to works of varying excellence. Literature liberates and at times even transforms the reader, it would be a pedagogical sin not to make such a transformation possible. In certain instances, to represent an author fairly, we have chosen a familiar story, but certainly this is preferable to novelty for its own sake. Where possible, we have chosen stories that are not only representative but exemplary. They are eminently teachable, containing a variety of techniques and a range of subject matter which make possible many useful comparisons. Our selections go back as far as Hawthorne and Poe and include many from the Continent as well as from English-speaking countries.

The Appendix contains five sets of comments by scholars and critics. These have several uses. Representing a variety of styles and approaches (sociological, psychological, impressionistic, moral, and so forth), they provide the student with criticism different from ours. (An unfortunate characteristic of most critical anthologies is that the editor's commentary is the student's only critical model.) These critics often contradict each other, and this disagreement should instruct the student in the truism that there is no one interpretation, and certainly no single "correct" one, and thus encourage his own critical responses.

We wish to thank our wives for their patience and encouragement and our students and colleagues—especially Bernard Wolpert and Professors Mark Goldman and James Westbrook—for their candid suggestions. Without the gracious assistance of Miss Catherine Buckley of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Library, and Mrs. Lisa Bryan, we would have been seriously handicapped. And to Professor Maynard Mack and Donald Hammonds we are indebted for their considerable editorial advice.

# Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS BOOK	ix
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF STORIES	xv
READING THE SHORT STORY	1

## Elements of Fiction

<b>ACTION (<i>Discussion</i>)</b>	<b>11</b>
JACK LONDON	<i>The White Silence</i> 14
	<i>Comment and Questions</i> 21
WILLIAM FAULKNER	<i>Red Leaves</i> 24
	<i>Comment and Questions</i> 42

<b>CHARACTER (<i>Discussion</i>)</b>	<b>46</b>
ISAAC BABEL	<i>How It Was Done in Odessa</i> 48
	<i>Comment and Questions</i> 55
ANTON CHEKHOV	<i>Gusev</i> 58
	<i>Comment and Questions</i> 68

**POINT OF VIEW (*Discussion*) 72**

RING LARDNER	<i>The Golden Honeymoon</i>	75
	<i>Comment and Questions</i>	88

KATHERINE MANSFIELD	<i>Sun and Moon</i>	91
	<i>Comment and Questions</i>	96

**IRONY (*Discussion*) 98**

FLANNERY O'CONNOR	<i>The Artificial Nigger</i>	101
	<i>Comment and Questions</i>	118

I B SINGER	<i>Gimpel the Fool</i>	122
	<i>Comment and Questions</i>	133

**SYMBOLISM (*Discussion*) 136**

F SCOTT FITZGERALD	<i>Babylon Revisited</i>	139
	<i>Comment and Questions</i>	155

HEINRICH BOLL	<i>Christmas Every Day</i>	159
	<i>Comment and Questions</i>	176

**Stories**

<i>Liam O Flaherty</i>	
THE FAIRY GOOSE	181

<i>Anton Chekhov</i>	
A TRIFLE FROM LIFE	186

*Sarah Orne Jewett*

THE TOWN POOR 191

*Sherwood Anderson*

THE CONTRACT 200

*Edgar Allan Poe*

LIGEIA 206

*Sholom Aleichem*

ETERNAL LIFE 218

*Guy de Maupassant*

MADAME TELLIER'S EXCURSION 234

*Nathaniel Hawthorne*

YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN 252

*Katherine Anne Porter*

THE JILTING OF GRANNY WEATHERALL 262

*J F Powers*

DAWN 269

*Frank O Connor*

ETERNAL TRIANGLE 277

*D H Lawrence*

THE BLIND MAN 285

*Henry James*

THE FIGURE IN THE CARPET 300

*Sean O'Faolain*

THE SILENCE OF THE VALLEY 327

*Gustave Flaubert*

THE LEGEND  
OF ST JULIAN THE HOSPITALLER 342

*James Joyce*

GRACE 359

*Eudora Welty*

POWERHOUSE 375

*Ernest Hemingway*

A CLEAN, WELL-LIGHTED PLACE 384

*Franz Kafka*

THE JUDGMENT 388

*Thomas Mann*

DEATH IN VENICE 396

## Appendix

### CRITICAL COMMENTS

THE GOLDEN HONEYMOON 447

LIGEIA 448

MADAME TELLIER'S EXCURSION 451

YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN 453

THE JUDGMENT 456



# Chronological Table of Stories

1835	Young Goodman Brown	Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)
1838	Ligeia	Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)
1877	The Legend of St Julian the Hospitaller	Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880)
1881	Madame Tellier's Excursion	Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893)
1886	A Trifle From Life	Anton Chekhov (1860-1904)
1890	Gusev	Anton Chekhov (1860-1904)
1890	The Town Poor	Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909)
1896	The Figure in the Carpet	Henry James (1843-1916)
—	Eternal Life	Sholom Aleichem (1859-1916)
1899	The White Silence	Jack London (1876-1916)
1912	Death in Venice	Thomas Mann (1875-1955)
1912	The Judgment	Franz Kafka (1883-1924)
1914	Grace	James Joyce (1882-1941)
1920	Sun and Moon	Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923)
1921	The Contract	Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941)
1922	The Blind Man	D H Lawrence (1885-1930)
1922	The Golden Honeymoon	Ring Lardner (1885-1933)
1923	How It Was Done in Odessa	Isaac Babel (1894-1940)
1927	The Fairy Goose	Liam O'Flaherty (1896- )
1929	The Jilting of Granny Weatherall	Katherine Anne Porter (1894- )
1930	Red Leaves	William Faulkner (1897- )
1931	Babylon Revisited	F Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)
1933	A Clean, Well-Lighted Place	Ernest Hemingway (1898- )
1941	Powerhouse	Eudora Welty (1909- )
1947	The Silence of the Valley	Sean O'Faolain (1900- )
1953	Gimpel the Fool	I B Singer (1904- )
1954	Eternal Triangle	Frank O'Connor (1903- )
1956	Dawn	J F Powers (1917- )
1956	The Artificial Nigger	Flannery O'Connor (1925- )
1957	Christmas Every Day	Heinrich Boll (1917- )



# Reading the Short Story

## 1

The short story is one of the most demanding—and one of the most rewarding—of literary forms. Of the writer it demands compression, careful selectivity, and an instinct for the revealing detail. To the trained reader it offers intensity, insight, and the kind of satisfaction that comes from compact unity. Since a short story can be read at one sitting, one might assume that its value and staying power are likewise restricted and of slight consequence. One of the purposes of this collection is to demonstrate that this assumption is inaccurate. The short story, because of its packed quality, its allusiveness, and its concentration, repays the closest possible reading and rereading.

Can the short story be defined?

Most definitions tell us only that it is short, usually between 1,000 and 10,000 words. This distinction does not help us to understand much about the story's real nature, although of course it helps us in a practical way to recognize the form. (Although it is true that most short stories are less than 10,000 words long, we cannot use this as a yardstick, in this book, for example, the stories by James, Maupassant, and Flannery O'Connor are longer.)

One critic, Mark Schorer, admits that we cannot distinguish among the forms of fiction (short story, novelette, and novel) by length alone. But he goes on to make a helpful distinction. "The short story is an art of moral revelation," he says, "the novel an art of moral evolution." This implies that the story deals with sudden, swift, piercing visions, while the novel offers us a much wider view by supplying detailed background material, setting forth all causes and all effects, and allowing us to watch the working-out of the change so necessary to all fiction. As Schorer further points out, "in both story and novel there is change, but the first is change in view that we are briefly shown, the other a change in conduct that more leisurely we trace."<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the scope of a short story is narrower than that of a novel, it does not try to do so much, nor does it elaborate so fully. We do not follow a character from birth to death, as we often do in a novel, but rather see him during a typical or critical moment—a

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Story: A Critical Anthology* by Mark Schorer. Copyright 1950 by Prentice Hall, Inc.

moment chosen because it is representative, or because it is the end result of his life's activities, or because it is a turning point after which he will never be quite the same again

Furthermore, although a novelist may handle many themes, plots and subplots, and characters in a single work, a short-story writer *usually* restricts himself to a single theme, a single plot, and a very limited number of characters

The novelette (sometimes called the short novel or novella) is a sort of compromise between the short story and the novel. Retaining the thematic unity and the small cast of characters peculiar to the short story, the novelette offers a wider canvas, a more gradual unfolding of events and emotions, and more space for digressions and development. Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice" is an outstanding example of this form. Had he written it as a novel, Mann would probably have spread out before us the entire span of Aschenbach's life—from birth to his tragic and ironic death in an alien environment—with chapters devoted to his education, training, friendships, marriage, family life, growth as an artist, travels, and gradual changes in thought and attitude. Having chosen the novelette form, Mann introduces Aschenbach as an elderly man, famous and respected, an established artist, past the age when the passions are violent, he confines the action to a little over a month and the setting almost exclusively to one city. The only other important character is Tadzio, and we see him only from Aschenbach's point of view. So far, "Death in Venice" might have been written as a short story. But look what the novelette form allows Mann to do: he can devote paragraphs of exposition to Aschenbach's ancestry and career, so that we can see the heights from which he falls, he can describe Venice and its mystery at length, so that the unhealthy atmosphere can both serve as backdrop for the story of Aschenbach's decline and play an important part itself, he can show us the gradual steps in that decline, and he can allow himself passages of philosophical and esthetic meditation to explain or rationalize the forces that reduce Aschenbach to physical and spiritual wreckage.

Written as a short story, "Death in Venice" would have been something entirely different, without the cumulative power and majesty of the present version certainly, stripped of much of Mann's philosophizing and scenic description. A short-story writer would have chosen only one or two highly significant scenes—perhaps the rejuvenation in the barber shop, or the street musicians' serenade, or the mass at San Marco, or perhaps a day on the beach—or would have focused on Aschenbach's moral dilemma over whether to leave Venice once he learns of the plague. This scene would have been expanded and colored so that its special symptomatic qualities would stand out. More would have been *suggested* and less explained fully. Symbols and hints rather than exposition would have filled in the background of Aschenbach's career and position. In short, the reader's sensi-

tivity and imagination would have to provide much that is now provided by the author

A short story, then, can probably best be defined not in terms of length but by reference to its concentrated tension, its careful selection of details and incidents, and its striking unity. These earmarks of the modern short story owe much to three writers: Poe, Chekhov, and Joyce.

Edgar Allan Poe's conception of the story is famous:

A skilled artist has constructed a tale. He has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents, but having deliberately conceived a certain *single effect* to be wrought, he then invents such incidents; he then combines such events and discusses them in such tone as may best serve him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very first sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then in his very first step has he committed a blunder. In the whole composition there should be no word written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design.<sup>2</sup>

This theory of the "single effect" dominates all of Poe's own stories (see "Ligeia" in this collection). And although it has been modified somewhat by more recent writers—notice the mixture of effects in "Christmas Every Day" and "Dawn"—its controlling precepts of unity and economy are generally recognized as vital to a well-made story.

Anton Chekhov, another master, complemented Poe's concept by warning that if a gun hangs on the wall in the first part of a story, it must be discharged before the story is over. In other words, *every* detail must contribute something to the atmosphere, characterization, or action. The theory of the "active detail" demands that everything must be used, that nothing be simply decorative, that nothing lie passive or inert. Note the use that Chekhov himself makes of the locket in "A Trifle from Life," and, for other examples, see the hair ribbon in "Young Goodman Brown," the shadow of the single tree in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," and the North Cemetery at the beginning of "Death in Venice." Again, economy and selectivity are called for.

James Joyce stressed the technique of revelation that he called the "epiphany" and cited as the heart of the short story. *Epiphany*, of course, is a religious term meaning the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles (the Magi). In literature, as Joyce used it, it signifies the point in the story when the veil is raised, the shadowy brought to light, the meaning grasped. It is, literally, a *showing forth*. A word or phrase, a shrug of the shoulders, a flicker of the eyelids, a red necktie, a falling leaf—any of these apparently trivial objects or events can be a manifestation, meaningful to both writer and reader as the illumination of all that went before. As the critic Harry Levin describes it, the epiphany is "the single word that tells the

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<sup>2</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* in *Graham's Magazine*, May 1842.

whole story the simple gesture that reveals a complex set of relationships”<sup>3</sup> The effective use of the epiphany requires extreme selectivity, the maximum of compression, and a sharp eye for the revealing detail In Joyce’s “Grace,” Father Purdon’s worldly sermon (especially the metaphor “spiritual accountant”) is the act of revelation, the light that this scene throws on Joyce’s attitude toward the cheapening and compromise of Dublin religious and public life, although indirect, is brilliant The epiphany is, of course, no monopoly of Joyce’s, most modern short-story writers take advantage of its economy and power In Sherwood Anderson’s “The Contract,” the cloud shadows racing across the sky disclose (to both the protagonist and the reader) man’s desperate yearning for freedom and society’s blocking of this desire And Flannery O’Connor’s use of the plaster statue of a Negro in “The Artificial Nigger” approaches an actual religious manifestation

The single effect, the active detail, the epiphany—these suggest better than any formal definition what sets the short story apart as an art form

## 2

Another distinguishing feature of modern fiction—both the novel and the short story—is the emphasis on *dramatization* If the reader will look at an early story like “Ligeia,” he will notice that Poe often merely *asserts* rather than dramatizes a feeling, as in this passage “An *intensity* [Poe’s italics] in thought, action, or speech was possibly, in her, a result, or at least an index, of that gigantic volition which, during our long intercourse, failed to give other and more immediate evidence of its existence” The intensity has not been shown to us through action, it has not been dramatized, but only asserted And when a feeling is merely asserted, the effect is less vivid and convincing Modern writers, influenced particularly by Chekhov, James, and Joyce, dramatize their material They have felt under artistic obligation to let the event give rise to the emotion This often makes their task more difficult, as Hemingway testifies Describing his early efforts, he said that he found that the greatest difficulty was to put down “what really happened in action, what the actual things were which produced the emotion you experienced”<sup>4</sup> And for many writers, this obligation to dramatize ruled out interpretations—the abstract assertions of the meaning of the story The dramatized action had to do full duty in conveying the meaning

But in fulfilling their obligation, writers like Hemingway often limited

<sup>3</sup> From *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction* by Harry Levin Copyright 1941 by New Directions Used by permission of New Directions

<sup>4</sup> From *Death in the Afternoon* by Ernest Hemingway Copyright 1932 by Charles Scribner’s Sons Reprinted by permission

the range of the story by presenting little more than scenes in dialogue form—a kind of play with a minimum of comment by the author, as in ‘A Clean, Well-Lighted Place’” Thus, although this form of scenic presentation is more immediate in its effect, writers like Faulkner and Mann use it less than they do the narrated scene, which allows them greater flexibility in expression Both, indeed, depart farther from the play-like scene by also using what we might call narrative reflection—philosophical, political, and the like Each of these methods of presenting a subject is satisfactory, each making its particular effect All we need keep in mind is that, whatever the method, *the subject should be rendered dramatically* This at least is a great principle of modern fiction—although it may not be realized in every line of a story

### 3

We need now to consider how a story is to be understood Understanding a story involves two kinds of meaning, *abstract* and *concrete* Frank O'Connor once defined the abstract meaning, or *theme* as “something that is worth something to everybody”<sup>5</sup> That is, it is a statement with a general significance For example, we might say that in *Macbeth* the theme is that excessive ambition will prove its own undoing, or that it is the evil effect of woman on man (A work may have many meanings, but to be valid each must be borne out by the facts)

But if a work has general, universal meanings (its abstract themes), of even more importance is the fact that it is a special, unique expression, that it presents a concrete, individual action Here the genesis of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* is instructive Faulkner remarked that it began with a picture of the ‘muddy seat of a little girl's drawers in a pear tree, where she could see through a window where her grandmother's funeral was taking place and report what was happening to her brothers on the ground below’<sup>6</sup> His interest was in the little girl in a particular situation, in a character in action, and our interest as readers is first of all in the same thing After we read a story, it is the image of the little girl or of Goodman Brown at the witches' meeting or of Aschenbach in the barber chair that we remember A literary work, then, has the power and fascination of the personal, together with the relevance of the universal But since the universality of a theme makes it more or less commonplace, we may say that literature invigorates stale ideas, embodying them in the flesh, blood, and bone of the historical moment, of contemporary feeling

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<sup>5</sup> From *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* Copyright 1958 by The Viking Press Reprinted by permission

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

From the example of Faulkner, we may go on to understand the relation between theme and story. For him, as for most writers, some seminal image such as that of the little girl becomes the germ of the story. And although, in his exuberance, a writer may let his characters go where they will, he must eventually get at what the story means. Faulkner went on to say that, in the course of setting down what he saw, he "realized the symbolism of the soiled pants," their *meaning*. Mere exuberance leads to a shapeless story, "Theme alone," as Robert Frost said, "can steady us down."<sup>7</sup> The writer thus *selects* and *arranges* his material in terms of the meaning, the theme he begins to see in it. This is the *form* the unfolding story takes.

Some readers stop with the abstract formulation of the story in the belief that they have now "got" it. If this were so, how then would we differentiate between *Macbeth* and another play in which, say, an ambitious executive, goaded by his wife, murders the corporation president to usurp an industrial kingdom? The difference is manifold, but, put simply, it lies in the *total* sense each work has for us. That is, we respond to the full impact not only of character in action but also of all the other elements—*atmosphere, setting, tone, sentence rhythms, structural patterns, imagery, symbolism, and the like*. We shall call this total sense the *full, concrete meaning*, which is nothing less than the story itself. The point of the distinction is this: *the full, concrete meaning of a story is dense and complex, requiring every word in the story for its expression*. An abstract formulation violates that fullness and complexity. Thus, although *Macbeth* and our hypothetical play have the same abstract theme, their full concrete meanings are *absolutely* different since they are expressed differently.

This difference between abstract and full, concrete meaning has further implications. What, for instance, is the fundamental objection to abridgments of fiction, such as those appearing in the *Reader's Digest* or in the cheaper paperbacks? No words are changed, parts are merely left out, and the editing is done shrewdly enough for the abstract theme to come through. The objection here is that the parts left in no longer have the meaning they had in relation to the parts left out. Thus the full meaning is lost both for the story as a whole and for the parts retained. And if these faithful abridgments distort the full meaning of a work, then a *paraphrase* or *synopsis* is even more inadequate. What these last two lack is everything: the *particular* expression of the story. Now we are often rightly passionate about abstract themes, comparing the treatment of similar ones, or using them as points of departure for excursions into philosophy, psychology, economics, or sociology. But the reader should be aware of what he is doing here, that he is really not talking about the work

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<sup>7</sup> From *Complete Poems of Robert Frost*. Copyright 1930, 1949, by Henry Holt and Company. Used by permission of the publisher.



*as literature* The ideal reader responds not only to mature ideas but also to the way they are dramatized Accordingly, he is responsive to any ideas that are presented well, not just to those he agrees with Thus a Catholic may be moved by *Paradise Lost*, a Jew by *The Divine Comedy*, and a communist by a bourgeois novel Indeed, the reader who sees a pet idea of his treated crudely or incompetently will very likely resent or even not read the work—or if he does, not for literary reasons

The way a story is presented determines the quality of our experience of it, in fact, all that we have said may be understood as leading to the principle that a story should be approached as an experience There is all the difference in the world between our experience of the passage “To be or not to be, that is the question” and our idea of it, formulated as Hamlet’s meditation on suicide To experience the work is to know it as it is, to dwell on its ideas is to know it only abstractly Indeed, until you feel an idea, it is fairly meaningless Ideas take on passionate life through literature, the literary work is feeling given artistic form We may further illustrate what we mean by the experience of a work by distinguishing between our approach to a story and to a report giving information, say, about a new development in physics You go *through* the report for the idea in it, but you *stop* with the story The report is a means to an end, the story is the end The experience of a story may be likened to that of Jacob wrestling with the angel And just as Jacob was wounded, so may we be—never again to be the same Reading a story is more an act of communion than a communication of ideas The ideas we abstract are significant, but our experience of the work is what endures



# Elements of Fiction

# Action

The most popular kind of story is the one that emphasizes simple action, with its elemental suspense—the fight, the chase, the hunt, the contest. It is popular because it satisfies a need, how often have you heard people say they like stories in which “something happens”? And, conversely, they may dismiss a story as dull or even meaningless because “nothing happens in it.” Of course, this “happening” usually refers to a physical event rather than a mental or emotional one, thus, an account of a child’s disillusionment (“A Trifle from Life,” “Sun and Moon”) or a critic’s search for a pattern underlying a writer’s works (“The Figure in the Carpet”) may well lack appeal to the reader searching for a tale of action.

However, it often happens that the mere retelling of an interesting physical event is strangely unsatisfying. Why? Because the reporter might include too many dull moments in the retelling, because he imposes no pattern on the actions except chronology, because—if he sticks to only the facts—he may fail to generate suspense or he may add anticlimactic details. In short, he uses no *art*. The artist adds, omits, invents, gives shape to the events. For example, a fifteen-round boxing match, if reported round by round, blow by blow, minute by minute, will almost certainly be less readable—even less meaningful—than a fictional version of the same fight. The fiction writer can provide the background of the boxers, supply motivation and undercurrents of emotion, ignore the lulls, and concentrate, say, on rounds one, three, seven, and nine—rounds in which knockdowns occurred or in which one boxer intentionally fouled the other. Briefly, what the artist does with his raw material is to eliminate dead spots and heighten key episodes. He creates a *plot*.

We have been loosely using the term *story* to mean the artistic working-over of events. Actually, the word *plot* is more exact as the designation of the chain of events in a story, the ordering and selection of these events. E. M. Forster’s distinction between these two terms is very useful.

We have defined a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. ‘The king died and then the queen died’ is a story.

‘The king died, and then the queen died of grief’ is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. Or again: ‘The queen died, no one knew why until it was discovered that it was through grief at the death of the king.’ This is a plot with

a mystery in it a form capable of high development It suspends the time sequence it moves as far away from the story as its limitations will allow Consider the death of the queen If it is in a story we say and then?" If it is in a plot we ask 'why?'<sup>8</sup>

Thus, a newspaper account of a boxing match is still a "newspaper story," but the creative artist brings a plot to the story And, as can be seen even in Forster's oversimplified examples, plot is most often a projection of character, the twists and turns in the action being a result of human motivation

The tale of action can also serve as the most obvious example of fictional *form*, classically described as following the pattern of rising action, climax, denouement, and (at times) falling action The rising action (or complication) includes everything that leads up to the climax establishment of setting, characters, character relationships, motivations, and so forth Often all this is called exposition, and, depending on the writer, can be handled either assertively or dramatically (see pages 4 and 5) The climax is the turning point, the crucial moment when the hero faces the villain, when the champion is being counted out, when the detective gathers all the suspects in one room What follows the climax is called the denouement (literally, the untying of the knot), which resolves the complication the hero kills the villain, the champion rises at the count of nine and knocks out the challenger, the detective exposes the scullery maid as the one who put the poison in the cocoa The falling action is simply the aftermath the hero, disguised as the villain, escapes from the castle, the victorious champion regains his self-respect and his wife's love, the scullery maid absolves the butler of all guilt

Usually, these elements appear more subtly than in the examples given above The denouement in "Red Leaves," for instance, is hardly breathtaking, since the reader has little doubt that the Negro will eventually be captured by the Indians The falling action in this story (the return of the Negro to the plantation and his actions in the face of death) is much more important On the other hand, Jack London, in "The White Silence," dispenses altogether with the falling action Malemute Kid shoots Mason (denouement) and, London says simply, "lashed the dogs into a wild gallop as he fled across the snow" The story is over, and the details of the remaining 200-mile trek across the Northern waste are left for the reader to fill in

Both stories deal with physical action, but the authors have chosen to supplement the action with implications that carry the narrative beyond the immediate moment, to charge the conflict with a universal rather than only a particular meaning Both use exotic settings—frontier swamps of

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<sup>8</sup> From *Aspects of the Novel* by E M Forster Copyright 1927 by Harcourt Brace and Company renewed by E M Forster and used by permission of the publishers

early Mississippi and the frozen Alaskan wilderness, both involve fairly primitive characters (although a close reading of the stories should qualify this statement) But, as our analyses demonstrate, important differences exist between the Faulkner and the London stories Read both stories and try to determine these differences before you turn to our discussions

# The White Silence

*Jack London*

"Carmen won't last more than a couple of days" Mason spat out a chunk of ice and surveyed the poor animal ruefully, then put her foot in his mouth and proceeded to bite out the ice which clustered cruelly between the toes

"I never saw a dog with a highfalutin' name that ever was worth a rap," he said, as he concluded his task and shoved her aside "They just fade away and die under the responsibility Did ye ever see one go wrong with a sensible name like Cassiar, Siwash, or Husky? No, sir! Take a look at Shookum here, he's—"

Snap! The lean brute flashed up, the white teeth just missing Mason's throat

"Ye will, will ye?" A shrewd clout behind the ear with the butt of the dogwhip stretched the animal in the snow, quivering softly, a yellow slaver dripping from its fangs

"As I was saying, just look at Shookum, here—he's got the spirit Bet ye he eats Carmen before the week's out"

"I'll bank another proposition against that," replied Malemute Kid, reversing the frozen bread placed before the fire to thaw "We'll eat Shookum before the trip is over What d' ye say, Ruth?"

The Indian woman settled the coffee with a piece of ice, glanced from Malemute Kid to her husband, then at the dogs, but vouchsafed no reply It was such a palpable truism that none was necessary Two hundred miles of unbroken trail in prospect, with a scant six days' grub for themselves and none for the dogs, could admit no other alternative The two men and the woman grouped about the fire and began their meagre meal The dogs lay in their harnesses, for it was a midday halt, and watched each mouthful enviously

"No more lunches after to-day," said Malemute Kid "And we've got to keep a close eye on the dogs,—they're getting vicious They'd just as soon pull a fellow down as not, if they get a chance"

"And I was president of an Epworth once, and taught in the Sunday-school" Having irrelevantly delivered himself of this, Mason fell into a dreamy contemplation of his steaming moccasins, but was aroused by

*From THE SON OF THE WOLF Copyright 1900 by Jack London Published by Houghton Mifflin Company*

Ruth filling his cup "Thank God, we've got slathers of tea! I've seen it growing, down in Tennessee What wouldn't I give for a hot corn-pone just now! Never mind, Ruth, you won't starve much longer, nor wear moccasins either "

The woman threw off her gloom at this, and in her eyes welled up a great love for her white lord,—the first white man she had ever seen,—the first man she had known to treat a woman as something better than a mere animal or beast of burden

"Yes, Ruth," continued her husband, having recourse to the macaronic jargon in which it was alone possible for them to understand each other, "wait till we clean up and pull for the Outside We'll take the White Man's canoe and go to the Salt Water Yes, bad water, rough water,—great mountains dance up and down all the time And so big, so far, so far away,—you travel ten sleep, twenty sleep, forty sleep" (he graphically enumerated the days on his fingers), "all the time water, bad water Then you come to great village, plenty people, just the same mosquitoes next summer Wigwams oh, so high,—ten, twenty pines Hi-yu skookum!"

He paused impotently, cast an appealing glance at Malemute Kid, then laboriously placed the twenty pines, end on end, by sign language Malemute Kid smiled with cheery cynicism, but Ruth's eyes were wide with wonder, and with pleasure, for she half believed he was joking, and such condescension pleased her poor woman's heart

"And then you step into a—a box, and pouf! up you go " He tossed his empty cup in the air by way of illustration, and as he deftly caught it, cried "And biff! down you come Oh, great medicine-men! You go Fort Yukon, I go Arctic City,—twenty-five sleep,—big string, all the time,—I catch him string,—I say, 'Hello, Ruth! How are ye?'—and you say, 'Is that my good husband?'—and I say 'Yes,'—and you say, 'No can bake good bread, no more soda,'—then I say, 'Look in cache, under flour, good-by ' You look and catch plenty soda All the time you Fort Yukon, me Arctic City Hi-yu medicine-man!"

Ruth smiled so ingenuously at the fairy story that both men burst into laughter A row among the dogs cut short the wonders of the Outside, and by the time the snarling combatants were separated, she had lashed the sleds and all was ready for the trail

"Mush! Baldy! Hi! Mush on!" Mason worked his whip smartly, and as the dogs whined low in the traces, broke out the sled with the gee-pole Ruth followed with the second team, leaving Malemute Kid, who had helped her start, to bring up the rear Strong man, brute that he was, capable of felling an ox at a blow, he could not bear to beat the poor animals, but humored them as a dog-driver rarely does,—nay, almost wept with them in their misery

"Come, mush on there, you poor sore-footed brutes!" he murmured, after several ineffectual attempts to start the load But his patience was at



last rewarded, and though whimpering with pain, they hastened to join their fellows

No more conversation, the toil of the trail will not permit such extravagance. And of all deadening labors, that of the Northland trail is the worst. Happy is the man who can weather a day's travel at the price of silence, and that on a beaten track.

And of all heart-breaking labors, that of breaking trail is the worst. At every step the great webbed shoe sinks till the snow is level with the knee. Then up, straight up, the deviation of a fraction of an inch being a certain precursor of disaster, the snowshoe must be lifted till the surface is cleared, then forward, down, and the other foot is raised perpendicularly for the matter of half a yard. He who tries this for the first time, if haply he avoids bringing his shoes in dangerous propinquity and measures not his length on the treacherous footing, will give up exhausted at the end of a hundred yards, he who can keep out of the way of the dogs for a whole day may well crawl into his sleeping-bag with a clear conscience and a pride which passeth all understanding, and he who travels twenty sleeps on the Long Trail is a man whom the gods may envy.

The afternoon wore on, and with the awe, born of the White Silence, the voiceless travellers bent to their work. Nature has many tricks where-with she convinces man of his finity,—the ceaseless flow of the tides, the fury of the storm, the shock of the earthquake, the long roll of heaven's artillery,—but the most tremendous, the most stupefying of all, is the passive phase of the White Silence. All movement ceases, the sky clears, the heavens are as brass, the slightest whisper seems sacrilege, and man becomes timid, affrighted at the sound of his own voice. Sole speck of life journeying across the ghostly wastes of a dead world, he trembles at his audacity, realizes that his is a maggot's life, nothing more. Strange thoughts arise unsummoned, and the mystery of all things strives for utterance. And the fear of death, of God, of the universe, comes over him,—the hope of the Resurrection and the Life, the yearning for immortality, the vain striving of the imprisoned essence,—it is then, if ever, man walks alone with God.

So wore the day away. The river took a great bend, and Mason headed his team for the cut-off across the narrow neck of land. But the dogs balked at the high bank. Again and again, though Ruth and Malemute Kid were shoving on the sled, they slipped back. Then came the concerted effort. The miserable creatures, weak from hunger, exerted their last strength. Up—up—the sled poised on the top of the bank, but the leader swung the string of dogs behind him to the right, fouling Mason's snowshoes. The result was grievous. Mason was whipped off his feet, one of the dogs fell in the traces, and the sled toppled back, dragging everything to the bottom again.

Slash! the whip fell among the dogs savagely, especially upon the one which had fallen

"Don't, Mason," entreated Malemute Kid, "the poor devil's on its last legs Wait and we'll put my team on"

Mason deliberately withheld the whip till the last word had fallen, then out flashed the long lash, completely curling about the offending creature's body Carmen—for it was Carmen—cowered in the snow, cried piteously, then rolled over on her side

It was a tragic moment, a pitiful incident of the trail,—a dying dog, two comrades in anger Ruth glanced solicitously from man to man But Malemute Kid restrained himself, though there was a world of reproach in his eyes, and bending over the dog, cut the traces No word was spoken The teams were double-spanned and the difficulty overcome, the sleds were under way again, the dying dog dragging herself along in the rear As long as an animal can travel, it is not shot, and this last chance is accorded it,—the crawling into camp, if it can, in the hope of a moose being killed

Already penitent for his angry action, but too stubborn to make amends, Mason toiled on at the head of the cavalcade, little dreaming that danger hovered in the air The timber clustered thick in the sheltered bottom, and through this they threaded their way Fifty feet or more from the trail towered a lofty pine For generations it had stood there, and for generations destiny had had this one end in view,—perhaps the same had been decreed of Mason

He stooped to fasten the loosened thong of his moccasin The sleds came to a halt and the dogs lay down in the snow without a whimper The stillness was weird, not a breath rustled the frost-encrusted forest, the cold and silence of outer space had chilled the heart and smote the trembling lips of nature A sigh pulsed through the air,—they did not seem to actually hear it, but rather felt it, like the premonition of movement in a motionless void Then the great tree, burdened with its weight of years and snow, played its last part in the tragedy of life He heard the warning crash and attempted to spring up, but, almost erect, caught the blow squarely on the shoulder

The sudden danger, the quick death,—how often had Malemute Kid faced it! The pine-needles were still quivering as he gave his commands and sprang into action Nor did the Indian girl faint or raise her voice in idle wailing, as might many of her white sisters At his order, she threw her weight on the end of a quickly extemporized handspike, easing the pressure and listening to her husband's groans, while Malemute Kid attacked the tree with his axe The steel rang merrily as it bit into the frozen trunk, each stroke being accompanied by a forced, audible respiration, the "Huh!" "Huh!" of the woodsman

At last the Kid laid the pitiable thing that was once a man in the snow. But worse than his comrade's pain was the dumb anguish in the woman's face, the blended look of hopeful, hopeless query. Little was said, those of the Northland are early taught the futility of words and the inestimable value of deeds. With the temperature at sixty-five below zero, a man cannot lie many minutes in the snow and live. So the sled-lashings were cut, and the sufferer, rolled in furs, laid on a couch of boughs. Before him roared a fire, built of the very wood which wrought the mishap. Behind and partially over him was stretched the primitive fly,—a piece of canvas, which caught the radiating heat and threw it back and down upon him,—a trick which men may know who study physics at the fount.

And men who have shared their bed with death know when the call is sounded. Mason was terribly crushed. The most cursory examination revealed it. His right arm, leg, and back were broken, his limbs were paralyzed from the hips, and the likelihood of internal injuries was large. An occasional moan was his only sign of life.

No hope, nothing to be done. The pitiless night crept slowly by,—Ruth's portion, the despairing stoicism of her race, and Malemute Kid adding new lines to his face of bronze. In fact, Mason suffered least of all, for he spent his time in Eastern Tennessee, in the Great Smoky Mountains, living over the scenes of his childhood. And most pathetic was the melody of his long-forgotten Southern vernacular, as he raved of swimming-holes and coon-hunts and watermelon raids. It was as Greek to Ruth, but the Kid understood and felt,—felt as only one can feel who has been shut out for years from all that civilization means.

Morning brought consciousness to the stricken man, and Malemute Kid bent closer to catch his whispers.

"You remember when we foregathered on the Tanana, four years come next ice-run? I didn't care so much for her then. It was more like she was pretty, and there was a smack of excitement about it, I think. But d' ye know, I've come to think a heap of her. She's been a good wife to me, always at my shoulder in the pinch. And when it comes to trading, you know there isn't her equal. D' ye recollect the time she shot the Moose-horn Rapids to pull you and me off that rock, the bullets whipping the water like hailstones?—and the time of the famine at Nuklukyeto?—or when she raced the ice-run to bring the news? Yes, she's been a good wife to me, better 'n that other one. Didn't know I'd been there? Never told you, eh? Well, I tried it once, down in the States. That's why I'm here. Been raised together, too. I came away to give her a chance for divorce. She got it.

"But that's got nothing to do with Ruth. I had thought of cleaning up and pulling for the Outside next year,—her and I,—but it's too late. Don't send her back to her people, Kid. It's beastly hard for a woman to go back. Think of it!—nearly four years on our bacon and beans and flour

and dried fruit, and then to go back to her fish and cariboo. It's not good for her to have tried our ways, to come to know they're better 'n her people's, and then return to them. Take care of her, Kid,—why don't you,—but no, you always fought shy of them,—and you never told me why you came to this country. Be kind to her, and send her back to the States as soon as you can. But fix it so as she can come back,—liable to get homesick, you know.

"And the youngster—it's drawn us closer, Kid. I only hope it is a boy. Think of it!—flesh of my flesh, Kid. He mustn't stop in this country. And if it's a girl, why she can't. Sell my furs, they'll fetch at least five thousand, and I've got as much more with the company. And handle my interests with yours. I think that bench claim will show up. See that he gets a good schooling, and Kid, above all, don't let him come back. This country was not made for white men.

"I'm a gone man, Kid. Three or four sleeps at the best. You've got to go on. You must go on! Remember, it's my wife, it's my boy,—O God! I hope it's a boy! You can't stay by me,—and I charge you, a dying man, to pull on."

"Give me three days," pleaded Malemute Kid. "You may change for the better, something may turn up."

"No."

"Just three days."

"You must pull on."

"Two days."

"It's my wife and my boy, Kid. You would not ask it."

"One day."

"No, no! I charge—"

"Only one day. We can shave it through on the grub, and I might knock over a moose."

"No,—all right, one day, but not a minute more. And Kid, don't—don't leave me to face it alone. Just a shot, one pull on the trigger. You understand. Think of it! Think of it! Flesh of my flesh, and I'll never live to see him!"

"Send Ruth here. I want to say good-by and tell her that she must think of the boy and not wait till I'm dead. She might refuse to go with you if I didn't. Good-by, old man, good-by."

"Kid! I say—a—sink a hole above the pup, next to the slide. I panned out forty cents on my shovel there."

"And Kid!" he stooped lower to catch the last faint words, the dying man's surrender of his pride. "I'm sorry—for—you know—Carmen."

Leaving the girl crying softly over her man, Malemute Kid slipped into his *parka* and snowshoes, tucked his rifle under his arm, and crept away into the forest. He was no tyro in the stern sorrows of the Northland, but never had he faced so stiff a problem as this. In the abstract, it was a

plain, mathematical proposition,—three possible lives as against one doomed one But now he hesitated For five years, shoulder to shoulder, on the rivers and trails, in the camps and mines, facing death by field and flood and famine, had they knitted the bonds of their comradeship So close was the tie, that he had often been conscious of a vague jealousy of Ruth from the first time she had come between And now it must be severed by his own hand

Though he prayed for a moose, just one moose, all game seemed to have deserted the land, and nightfall found the exhausted man crawling into camp, light-handed, heavy-hearted An uproar from the dogs and shrill cries from Ruth hastened him

Bursting into the camp, he saw the girl in the midst of the snarling pack, laying about her with an axe The dogs had broken the iron rule of their masters and were rushing the grub He joined the issue with his rifle reversed, and the hoary game of natural selection was played out with all the ruthlessness of its primeval environment Rifle and axe went up and down, hit or missed with monotonous regularity, lithe bodies flashed, with wild eyes and dripping fangs, and man and beast fought for supremacy to the bitterest conclusion Then the beaten brutes crept to the edge of the firelight, licking their wounds, voicing their misery to the stars

The whole stock of dried salmon had been devoured, and perhaps five pounds of flour remained to tide them over two hundred miles of wilderness Ruth returned to her husband, while Malemute Kid cut up the warm body of one of the dogs, the skull of which had been crushed by the axe Every portion was carefully put away, save the hide and offal, which were cast to his fellows of the moment before

Morning brought fresh trouble The animals were turning on each other Carmen, who still clung to her slender thread of life, was downed by the pack The lash fell among them unheeded They cringed and cried under the blows, but refused to scatter till the last wretched bit had disappeared,—bones, hide, hair, everything

Malemute Kid went about his work, listening to Mason, who was back in Tennessee, delivering tangled discourses and wild exhortations to his brethren of other days

Taking advantage of neighboring pines, he worked rapidly, and Ruth watched him make a cache similar to those sometimes used by hunters to preserve their meat from the wolverines and dogs One after the other, he bent the tops of two small pines toward each other and nearly to the ground, making them fast with thongs of moosehide Then he beat the dogs into submission and harnessed them to two of the sleds, loading the same with everything but the furs which enveloped Mason These he wrapped and lashed tightly about him, fastening either end of the robes to the bent

piners A single stroke of his hunting-knife would release them and send the body high in the air

Ruth had received her husband's last wishes and made no struggle Poor girl, she had learned the lesson of obedience well From a child, she had bowed, and seen all women bow, to the lords of creation, and it did not seem in the nature of things for woman to resist The Kid permitted her one outburst of grief, as she kissed her husband,—her own people had no such custom,—then led her to the foremost sled and helped her into her snowshoes Blindly, instinctively, she took the gee-pole and whip, and 'mushed' the dogs out on the trail Then he returned to Mason, who had fallen into a coma, and long after she was out of sight, crouched by the fire, waiting, hoping, praying for his comrade to die

It is not pleasant to be alone with painful thoughts in the White Silence The silence of gloom is merciful, shrouding one as with protection and breathing a thousand intangible sympathies, but the bright White Silence, clear and cold, under steely skies, is pitiless

An hour passed,—two hours,—but the man would not die At high noon, the sun, without raising its rim above the southern horizon, threw a suggestion of fire athwart the heavens, then quickly drew it back Malemute Kid roused and dragged himself to his comrade's side He cast one glance about him The White Silence seemed to sneer, and a great fear came upon him There was a sharp report, Mason swung into his aerial sepulchre, and Malemute Kid lashed the dogs into a wild gallop as he fled across the snow

### COMMENT

From its direct, swift, vivid opening sentence to its equally exciting long-shot movie ending, this story appears to be almost pure narrative Stripped of its pseudo-Darwinian philosophy and its "literary" language, "The White Silence" might serve as an example of the oldest form of story-telling an account of a hunt, a chase, a physical struggle The romanticized picture of cavemen crouching around the fire, gesturing and grunting about the day's tree-felling or last week's mastodon killing is only hypothetical But something like this situation must have been the origin of narrative

We are not concerned with the "truth" of the experience but rather with the excitement stirred up in the telling, the re-creation of the fear, the thrills, the danger, the suspense, and in this *re-creation*, the raw material of experience is given a new shape, a more or less "artistic" form Rough edges are rounded off, irrelevant or distracting details are deleted, time is compressed or stretched out, incidents are invented for the sake of color, symmetry, contrast, development, or further illustration Furthermore, the story-teller intrudes his own personality and interpretations Jack London is the observer—all-seeing, enabled by his lofty position to tell us the past history of his characters ("For five years, shoulder to shoulder had

they knitted the bonds of their comradeship”), to describe their unexpressed feelings (“Already penitent for his angry action, but too stubborn to make amends”), to establish a context for the action (“Two hundred miles of unbroken trail in prospect, with a scant six days’ grub for themselves and none for the dogs”), and to make generalized comments (“It was a tragic moment, a pitiful incident of the trail”, “Poor girl, she had learned the lesson of obedience well”) He also, of course, creates suspense by setting traps for his characters, warning the reader beforehand of the consequences of certain acts, underlining risks and temptations London, for example, in the passage already quoted, tells us that the prospectors’ food is likely to run out, he elsewhere points up the terrors of trail-breaking, and before the tree falls, the reader is told that the destinies of this “lofty pine” and of Mason are about to intersect

A tale of action has not only this basic kind of suspense but also conflict—the necessary ingredient of all fiction Here, two conflicts stand out man versus animal, and, more inclusively, man versus a pitiless, indifferent Nature These are timeless, universal conflicts, part of the fairly limited list used by all story-tellers man versus man, man versus society, man versus nature, man versus himself This latter conflict is the mainstay of many contemporary writers, as you will see upon reading the stories in this volume by Hemingway, Mann, Fitzgerald, and others But it is interesting that even in London’s rather low-level action story, we have an example of internal conflict when Malemute Kid is racked by indecision whether to abandon Mason or to remain with him and risk the lives of Ruth (of whom he had been vaguely jealous) and her unborn child

Since the London story is primarily concerned with suspense, we can expect the characters to be simple and close to stereotypes, and theme to be subordinated Consider Malemute Kid the noble white hunter, nameless except for the almost anonymous heroic title, solitary, invincible, both ruthless and honorable, kind to dogs and children, he appears in many of London’s stories surrounded by mysterious legends In “The Son of the Wolf,” for instance, he is described as “a mighty man, straight as a willow-shoot, and tall, strong as the bald-faced grizzly, with a heart like the full summer moon” He is, then, an almost mythical figure—a Superman of the frozen North, a Paul Bunyan in a parka—larger than life and practically without human weaknesses and foibles Mythical figures are, in fact, characteristic of simply conceived stories, hence the plentiful supply from radio, television, and comic books the Lone Ranger, Tarzan of the Apes, and Mighty Mouse

As for theme, despite the fact that London indulges in a few speculations about “the hoary game of natural selection” and the survival of the fittest, and some misty musings about man walking alone with God in the great White Silence, the reader is finally left with little besides an impression of long-suffering heroism against merciless odds And when you have seen the outcome of the struggle—Mason in his “aerial sepulchre” and Malemute Kid fleeing with Ruth across the snow—you have seen all, nothing pulls you back to the story because nothing is left to tease the

mind or the heart, nothing to repay a closer reading. The story has been told, and the clock has run down. Fate has played its little trick on Mason, and Malemute Kid is off to further adventures.

We do not wish to imply that London does not strive for something more complex than a naked tale of action and death. He introduces a reference to miscegenation—a white man married to an Indian woman—but neither develops it fully nor treats it originally. Also, the level of the language indicates a rather absurd attempt to be “literary,” that is, to raise the tone of the story by a fancy (and incongruous) vocabulary. Mason did not look at the dog, he “surveyed the poor animal ruefully”; Ruth “vouchsafed no reply” to her husband’s question because it was “such a palpable truism”; Mason “graphically enumerated the days”; a handspike was “quickly extemporized.” Used ironically, this language would reduce the story to a humorous anecdote, used seriously in “The White Silence,” its incongruity turns drama into melodrama and makes much of the tale unwittingly ludicrous.

It would be too easy to dismiss the simple action story as not worth serious consideration. Such a story often is carefully constructed, precisely trimmed, and gripping (although usually only upon first reading). Told without pretense or apology for not being something more ambitious, it may well be a minor work of art. And when an exciting action is given shape by a serious theme, the result is *Moby Dick*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, or the next story, Faulkner’s “Red Leaves.”

## QUESTIONS ON ACTION

1 The analysis above lists a number of the most common conflicts in fiction. Note that “man” is one member of each conflict. Is this always so? London himself has written many stories about animals versus other animals. In what sense might we say that he is still dealing with *human* conflict?

2 We have described Malemute Kid as a superhuman, almost mythical figure. Does this necessarily mean that the reader cannot be interested in him, cannot *identify* with him?

3 Reread the paragraph London devotes to “the White Silence.” Can you justify its inclusion in a story of action? Notice that London does not *dramatize* the effects of this silence but simply *tells* us about them. Can you imagine how the same material might have been rendered dramatically? In “Red Leaves,” how does Faulkner dramatize the silence and emptiness of the slave quarters, the suffocating terror of the swamp?

## Other Considerations

1 What is London’s purpose in making Mason a former Methodist Sunday-school teacher? A Southerner?

2 Are Mason and Ruth stereotyped characters, or do they have some of the unpredictable qualities of living beings?

3 Does Malemute Kid’s humane attitude toward the dogs contribute anything besides a contrast with Mason’s treatment of them?



# Red Leaves

*William Faulkner*

## I

The two Indians crossed the plantation toward the slave quarters Neat with whitewash, of baked soft brick, the two rows of houses in which lived the slaves belonging to the clan, faced one another across the mild shade of the lane marked and scored with naked feet and with a few homemade toys mute in the dust There was no sign of life

"I know what we will find," the first Indian said

"What we will not find," the second said Although it was noon, the lane was vacant, the doors of the cabins empty and quiet, no cooking smoke rose from any of the chinked and plastered chimneys

"Yes It happened like this when the father of him who is now the Man died "

"You mean, of him who was the Man "

"Yao "

The first Indian's name was Three Basket He was perhaps sixty They were both squat men, a little solid, burgherlike, paunchy, with big heads, big, broad, dust-colored faces of a certain blurred serenity like carved heads on a ruined wall in Siam or Sumatra, looming out of a mist The sun had done it, the violent sun, the violent shade Their hair looked like sedge grass on burnt-over land Clamped through one ear Three Basket wore an enameled snuffbox

"I have said all the time that this is not the good way In the old days there were no quarters, no Negroes A man's time was his own then He had time Now he must spend most of it finding work for them who prefer sweating to do "

"They are like horses and dogs "

"They are like nothing in this sensible world Nothing contents them save sweat They are worse than the white people "

"It is not as though the Man himself had to find work for them to do "

"You said it I do not like slavery It is not the good way In the old days, there was the good way But not now "

"You do not remember the old way either "

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"I have listened to them who do And I have tried this way Man was not made to sweat "

"That's so See what it has done to their flesh "

"Yes Black It has a bitter taste, too "

"You have eaten of it?"

"Once I was young then, and more hardy in the appetite than now Now it is different with me "

"Yes They are too valuable to eat now "

"There is a bitter taste to the flesh which I do not like "

"They are too valuable to eat, anyway, when the white men will give horses for them "

They entered the lane The mute, meager toys—the fetish-shaped objects made of wood and rags and feathers—lay in the dust about the patinaed doorsteps, among bones and broken gourd dishes But there was no sound from any cabin, no face in any door, had not been since yesterday, when Issetibbeha died But they already knew what they would find

It was in the central cabin, a house a little larger than the others, where at certain phases of the moon the Negroes would gather to begin their ceremonies before removing after nightfall to the creek bottom, where they kept the drums In this room they kept the minor accessories, the cryptic ornaments, the ceremonial records which consisted of sticks daubed with red clay in symbols It had a hearth in the center of the floor, beneath a hole in the roof, with a few cold wood ashes and a suspended iron pot The window shutters were closed, when the two Indians entered, after the abashless sunlight they could distinguish nothing with the eyes save a movement, shadow, out of which eyeballs rolled, so that the place appeared to be full of Negroes The two Indians stood in the door

"Yao," Basket said "I said this is not the good way "

"I don't think I want to be here," the second said

"That is black man's fear which you smell It does not smell as ours does "

"I don't think I want to be here "

"Your fear has an odor too "

"Maybe it is Issetibbeha which we smell "

"Yao He knows He knows what we will find here He knew when he died what we should find here today " Out of the rank twilight of the room the eyes, the smell, of Negroes rolled about them "I am Three Basket, whom you know," Basket said into the room "We are come from the Man He whom we seek is gone?" The Negroes said nothing The smell of them, of their bodies, seemed to ebb and flux in the still hot air They seemed to be musing as one upon something remote, inscrutable They were like a single octopus They were like the roots of a huge tree uncovered, the earth broken momentarily upon the writhen, thick, fetid tangle

of its lightless and outraged life "Come," Basket said "You know our errand Is he whom we seek gone?"

"They are thinking something," the second said "I do not want to be here "

"They are knowing something," Basket said

"They are hiding him, you think?"

"No He is gone He has been gone since last night It happened like this before, when the grandfather of him who is now the Man died It took us three days to catch him For three days Doom lay above the ground, saying, 'I see my horse and my dog But I do not see my slave What have you done with him that you will not permit me to lie quiet?' "

"They do not like to die "

"Yao They cling It makes trouble for us, always A people without honor and without decorum Always a trouble "

"I do not like it here "

"Nor do I But then, they are savages, they cannot be expected to regard usage That is why I say that this way is a bad way "

"Yao They cling They would even rather work in the sun than to enter the earth with a chief But he is gone "

The Negroes had said nothing, made no sound The white eyeballs rolled, wild, subdued, the smell was rank, violent "Yes, they fear," the second said "What shall we do now?"

"Let us go and talk with the Man "

"Will Mocketubbe listen?"

"What can he do? He will not like to But he is the Man now "

"Yao He is the Man He can wear the shoes with the red heels all the time now " They turned and went out There was no door in the door frame There were no doors in any of the cabins

"He did that anyway," Basket said

"Behind Issetibbeha's back But now they are his shoes, since he is the Man "

"Yao Issetibbeha did not like it I have heard I know that he said to Mocketubbe 'When you are the Man, the shoes will be yours But until then, they are my shoes ' But now Mocketubbe is the Man, he can wear them "

"Yao," the second said "He is the Man now He used to wear the shoes behind Issetibbeha's back, and it was not known if Issetibbeha knew this or not And then Issetibbeha became dead, who was not old, and the shoes are Mocketubbe's, since he is the Man now What do you think of that?"

"I don't think about it," Basket said "Do you?"

"No," the second said

"Good," Basket said "You are wise "

## II

The house sat on a knoll, surrounded by oak trees. The front of it was one story in height, composed of the deck house of a steamboat which had gone ashore and which Doom, Issetibbeha's father, had dismantled with his slaves and hauled on cypress rollers twelve miles home overland. It took them five months. His house consisted at the time of one brick wall. He set the steamboat broadside on to the wall, where now the chipped and flaked gilding of the rococo cornices arched in faint splendor above the gilt lettering of the stateroom names above the jalousied doors.

Doom had been born merely a subchief, a Mingo, one of three children on the mother's side of the family. He made a journey—he was a young man then and New Orleans was a European city—from north Mississippi to New Orleans by keel boat, where he met the Chevalier Sœur Blonde de Vitry, a man whose social position, on its face, was as equivocal as Doom's own. In New Orleans, among the gamblers and cutthroats of the river front, Doom, under the tutelage of his patron, passed as the chief, the Man, the hereditary owner of that land which belonged to the male side of the family, it was the Chevalier de Vitry who spoke of him as *l'Homme* or *de l'Homme*, and hence Doom.

They were seen everywhere together—the Indian, the squat man with a bold, inscrutable, underbred face, and the Parisian, the expatriate, the friend, it was said, of Carondelet and the intimate of General Wilkinson. Then they disappeared, the two of them, vanishing from their old equivocal haunts and leaving behind them the legend of the sums which Doom was believed to have won, and some tale about a young woman, daughter of a fairly well-to-do West Indian family, the son and brother of whom sought Doom with a pistol about his old haunts for some time after his disappearance.

Six months later the young woman herself disappeared, boarding the Saint Louis packet, which put in one night at a wood landing on the north Mississippi side, where the woman, accompanied by a Negro maid, got off. Four Indians met her with a horse and wagon, and they traveled for three days, slowly, since she was already big with child, to the plantation, where she found that Doom was now chief. He never told her how he accomplished it, save that his uncle and his cousin had died suddenly. Before that time the house had consisted of a brick wall built by shiftless slaves, against which was propped a thatched lean-to divided into rooms and littered with bones and refuse, set in the center of ten thousand acres of matchless parklike forest where deer grazed like domestic cattle. Doom and the woman were married there a short time before Issetibbeha was born, by a combination itinerant minister and slave trader who arrived on a mule, to the saddle of which was lashed a cotton umbrella and a three-gallon

demijohn of whiskey After that, Doom began to acquire more slaves and to cultivate some of his land, as the white people did But he never had enough for them to do In utter idleness the majority of them led lives transplanted whole out of African jungles, save on the occasions when, entertaining guests, Doom coursed them with dogs

When Doom died, Issetibbeha, his son, was nineteen He became proprietor of the land and of the quintupled herd of blacks for which he had no use at all Though the title of Man rested with him, there was a hierarchy of cousins and uncles who ruled the clan and who finally gathered in squatting conclave over the Negro question, squatting profoundly beneath the golden names above the doors of the steamboat

"We cannot eat them," one said

"Why not?"

"There are too many of them "

"That's true," a third said "Once we started, we should have to eat them all And that much flesh diet is not good for man "

"Perhaps they will be like deer flesh That cannot hurt you "

"We might kill a few of them and not eat them," Issetibbeha said

They looked at him for a while "What for?" one said

"That is true," a second said "We cannot do that They are too valuable, remember all the bother they have caused us, finding things for them to do We must do as the white men do "

"How is that?" Issetibbeha said

"Raise more Negroes by clearing more land to make corn to feed them, then sell them We will clear the land and plant it with food and raise Negroes and sell them to the white men for money "

"But what will we do with this money?" a third said

They thought for a while

"We will see," the first said They squatted, profound, grave

"It means work," the third said

"Let the Negroes do it," the first said

"Yao Let them To sweat is bad It is damp It opens the pores "

"And then the night air enters "

"Yao Let the Negroes do it They appear to like sweating "

So they cleared the land with the Negroes and planted it in grain Up to that time the slaves had lived in a huge pen with a lean-to roof over one corner, like a pen for pigs But now they began to build quarters, cabins, putting the young Negroes in the cabins in pairs to mate, five years later Issetibbeha sold forty head to a Memphis trader, and he took the money and went abroad upon it, his maternal uncle from New Orleans conducting the trip At that time the Chevalier Sœur Blonde de Vitry was an old man in Paris, in a toupee and a corset and a careful, toothless old face fixed in a grimace quizzical and profoundly tragic He borrowed three hundred dollars from Issetibbeha and in return he introduced him into

certain circles, a year later Issetibbeha returned home with a gilt bed, a pair of girandoles by whose light it was said that Pompadour arranged her hair while Louis smirked at his mirrored face across her powdered shoulder, and a pair of slippers with red heels. They were too small for him, since he had not worn shoes at all until he reached New Orleans on his way abroad.

He brought the slippers home in tissue paper and kept them in the remaining pocket of a pair of saddlebags filled with cedar shavings, save when he took them out on occasion for his son, Mocketubbe, to play with. At three years of age Mocketubbe had a broad, flat, Mongolian face that appeared to exist in a complete and unfathomable lethargy, until confronted by the slippers.

Mocketubbe's mother was a comely girl whom Issetibbeha had seen one day working in her shift in a melon patch. He stopped and watched her for a while—the broad, solid thighs, the sound back, the serene face. He was on his way to the creek to fish that day, but he didn't go any farther, perhaps while he stood there watching the unaware girl he may have remembered his own mother, the city woman, the fugitive with her fans and laces and her Negro blood, and all the tawdry shabbiness of that sorry affair. Within the year Mocketubbe was born, even at three he could not get his feet into the slippers. Watching him in the still, hot afternoons as he struggled with the slippers with a certain monstrous repudiation of fact, Issetibbeha laughed, quietly to himself. He laughed at Mocketubbe's antics with the shoes for several years, because Mocketubbe did not give up trying to put them on until he was sixteen. Then he quit. Or Issetibbeha thought he had. But he had merely quit trying in Issetibbeha's presence. Issetibbeha's newest wife told him that Mocketubbe had stolen and hidden the shoes. Issetibbeha quit laughing then, and he sent the woman away, so that he was alone. "Yao," he said, "I too like being alive, it seems." He sent for Mocketubbe. "I give them to you," he said.

Mocketubbe was twenty-five then, unmarried. Issetibbeha was not tall, but he was taller by six inches than his son and almost a hundred pounds lighter. Mocketubbe was already diseased with flesh, with a pale, broad, inert face and dropsical hands and feet. "They are yours now," Issetibbeha said, watching him. Mocketubbe had looked at him once when he entered, a glance brief, discreet, veiled.

"Thanks," he said.

Issetibbeha looked at him. He could never tell if Mocketubbe saw anything, looked at anything. "Why will it not be the same if I give the slippers to you?"

"Thanks," Mocketubbe said. Issetibbeha was using snuff at the time, a white man had shown him how to put the powder into his lip and scour it against his teeth with a twig of gum or of alpeha.

"Well," he said, "a man cannot live forever." He looked at his son,

then his gaze went blank in turn, unseeing, and he mused for an instant You could not tell what he was thinking, save that he said half aloud "Yao But Doom's uncle had no shoes with red heels " He looked at his son again, fat, inert "Beneath all that, a man might think of doing anything and it not be known until too late " He sat in a splint chair hammocked with deer thongs "He cannot even get them on, he and I are both frustrated by the same gross meat which he wears He cannot even get them on But is that my fault?"

He lived for five years longer, then he died He was sick one night, and though the doctor came in a skunk-skin vest and burned sticks, Issetibbeha died before noon

That was yesterday, the grave was dug, and for twelve hours now the People had been coming in wagons and carriages and on horseback and afoot, to eat the baked dog and the succotash and the yams cooked in ashes and to attend the funeral

### III

"It will be three days," Basket said, as he and the other Indian returned to the house "It will be three days and the food will not be enough, I have seen it before "

The second Indian's name was Louis Berry "He will smell too, in this weather "

"Yao They are nothing but a trouble and a care "

"Maybe it will not take three days "

"They run far Yao We will smell this Man before he enters the earth You watch and see if I am not right "

They approached the house

"He can wear the shoes now," Berry said "He can wear them now in man's sight "

"He cannot wear them for a while yet," Basket said Berry looked at him "He will lead the hunt "

"Moketubbe?" Berry said "Do you think he will? A man to whom even talking is travail?"

"What else can he do? It is his own father who will soon begin to smell "

"That is true," Berry said "There is even yet a price he must pay for the shoes Yao He has truly bought them What do you think?"

"What do you think?"

"What do you think?"

"I think nothing "

"Nor do I Issetibbeha will not need the shoes now Let Moketubbe have them, Issetibbeha will not care "

"Yao Man must die "

"Yao Let him, there is still the Man "

The bark roof of the porch was supported by peeled cypress poles, high above the texas of the steamboat, shading an unfloored banquette where on the trodden earth mules and horses were tethered in bad weather. On the forward end of the steamboat's deck sat an old man and two women. One of the women was dressing a fowl, the other was shelling corn. The old man was talking. He was barefoot, in a long linen frock coat and a beaver hat.

"This world is going to the dogs," he said. "It is being ruined by white men. We got along fine for years and years, before the white men foisted their Negroes upon us. In the old days the old men sat in the shade and ate stewed deer's flesh and corn and smoked tobacco and talked of honor and grave affairs, now what do we do? Even the old wear themselves into the grave taking care of them that like sweating." When Basket and Berry crossed the deck he ceased and looked up at them. His eyes were querulous, bleared, his face was myriad with tiny wrinkles. "He is fled also," he said.

"Yes," Berry said, "he is gone."

"I knew it. I told them so. It will take three weeks, like when Doom died. You watch and see."

"It was three days, not three weeks," Berry said.

"Were you there?"

"No," Berry said. "But I have heard."

"Well, I was there," the old man said. "For three whole weeks, through the swamps and the briers—" They went on and left him talking.

What had been the saloon of the steamboat was now a shell, rotting slowly, the polished mahogany, the carving glinting momentarily and fading through the mold in figures cabalistic and profound, the gutted windows were like cataracted eyes. It contained a few sacks of seed or grain, and the fore part of the running gear of a barouche, to the axle of which two C-springs rusted in graceful curves, supporting nothing. In one corner a fox cub ran steadily and soundlessly up and down a willow cage, three scrawny gamecocks moved in the dust, and the place was pocked and marked with their dried droppings.

They passed through the brick wall and entered a big room of chinked logs. It contained the hinder part of the barouche, and the dismantled body lying on its side, the window slatted over with willow withes, through which protruded the heads, the still, beady, outraged eyes and frayed combs of still more game chickens. It was floored with packed clay, in one corner leaned a crude plow and two hand-hewn boat paddles. From the ceiling, suspended by four deer thongs, hung the gilt bed which Issetibbeha had fetched from Paris. It had neither mattress nor springs, the frame criss-crossed now by a neat hammocking of thongs.

Issetibbeha had tried to have his newest wife, the young one, sleep in



the bed He was congenitally short of breath himself, and he passed the nights half reclining in his splint chair He would see her to bed and, later, wakeful, sleeping as he did but three or four hours a night, he would sit in the darkness and simulate slumber and listen to her sneak infinitesimally from the gilt and ribboned bed, to lie on a quilt pallet on the floor until just before daylight Then she would enter the bed quietly again and in turn simulate slumber, while in the darkness beside her Issetibbeha quietly laughed and laughed

The girandoles were lashed by thongs to two sticks propped in a corner where a ten-gallon whiskey keg lay also There was a clay hearth, facing it, in the splint chair, Mocketubbe sat He was maybe an inch better than five feet tall, and he weighed two hundred and fifty pounds He wore a broadcloth coat and no shirt, his round, smooth copper balloon of belly swelling above the bottom piece of a suit of linen underwear On his feet were the slippers with the red heels Behind his chair stood a stripling with a punkah-like fan made of fringed paper Mocketubbe sat motionless, with his broad, yellow face with its closed eyes and flat nostrils, his flipper-like arms extended On his face was an expression profound, tragic, and inert He did not open his eyes when Basket and Berry came in

"He has worn them since daylight?" Basket said

"Since daylight," the stripling said The fan did not cease "You can see "

"Yao," Basket said "We can see " Mocketubbe did not move He looked like an effigy, like a Malay god in frock coat, drawers, naked chest, the trivial scarlet-heeled shoes

"I wouldn't disturb him, if I were you," the stripling said

"Not if I were you," Basket said He and Berry squatted The stripling moved the fan steadily "O Man," Basket said, 'listen " Mocketubbe did not move "He is gone," Basket said

"I told you so," the stripling said "I knew he would flee I told you "

"Yao," Basket said "You are not the first to tell us afterward what we should have known before Why is it that some of you wise men took no steps yesterday to prevent this?"

"He does not wish to die," Berry said

"Why should he not wish it?" Basket said

"Because he must die some day is no reason," the stripling said "That would not convince me either, old man "

"Hold your tongue," Berry said

"For twenty years," Basket said, "while others of his race sweat in the fields, he served the Man in the shade Why should he not wish to die, since he did not wish to sweat?"

"And it will be quick," Berry said "It will not take long "

"Catch him and tell him that," the stripling said

"Hush," Berry said They squatted, watching Mocketubbe's face He

might have been dead himself. It was as though he were cased so in flesh that even breathing took place too deep within him to show.

"Listen, O Man," Basket said. "Issetibbeha is dead. He waits. His dog and his horse we have. But his slave has fled. The one who held the pot for him, who ate of his food, from his dish, is fled. Issetibbeha waits."

"Yao," Berry said.

"This is not the first time," Basket said. "This happened when Doom, thy grandfather, lay waiting at the door of the earth. He lay waiting three days, saying, 'Where is my Negro?' And Issetibbeha, thy father, answered, 'I will find him. Rest, I will bring him to you so that you may begin the journey.'"

"Yao," Berry said.

Moketubbe had not moved, had not opened his eyes.

"For three days Issetibbeha hunted in the bottom," Basket said. "He did not even return home for food, until the Negro was with him, then he said to Doom, his father, 'Here is thy dog, thy horse, thy Negro, rest.' Issetibbeha, who is dead since yesterday, said it. And now Issetibbeha's Negro is fled. His horse and his dog wait with him, but his Negro is fled."

"Yao," Berry said.

Moketubbe had not moved. His eyes were closed, upon his supine monstrous shape there was a colossal inertia, something profoundly immobile, beyond and impervious to flesh. They watched his face, squatting.

"When thy father was newly the Man, this happened," Basket said. "And it was Issetibbeha who brought back the slave to where his father waited to enter the earth." Moketubbe's face had not moved, his eyes had not moved. After a while Basket said, "Remove the shoes."

The stripping removed the shoes. Moketubbe began to pant, his bare chest moving deep, as though he were rising from beyond his unfathomed flesh back into life, like up from the water, the sea. But his eyes had not opened yet.

Berry said, "He will lead the hunt."

"Yao," Basket said. "He is the Man. He will lead the hunt."

#### IV

All that day the Negro, Issetibbeha's body servant, hidden in the barn, watched Issetibbeha's dying. He was forty, a Guinea man. He had a flat nose, a close, small head, the inside corners of his eyes showed red a little, and his prominent gums were a pale bluish red above his square, broad teeth. He had been taken at fourteen by a trader off Kamerun, before his teeth had been filed. He had been Issetibbeha's body servant for twenty-three years.

On the day before, the day on which Issetibbeha lay sick, he returned to the quarters at dusk. In that unhurried hour the smoke of the cooking fires blew slowly across the street from door to door, carrying into the

opposite one the smell of the identical meat and bread. The women tended them, the men were gathered at the head of the lane, watching him as he came down the slope from the house, putting his naked feet down carefully in a strange dusk. To the waiting men his eyeballs were a little luminous.

"Issetibbeha is not dead yet," the headman said.

"Not dead," the body servant said. "Who not dead?"

In the dusk they had faces like his, the different ages, the thoughts sealed inscrutable behind faces like the death masks of apes. The smell of the fires, the cooking, blew sharp and slow across the strange dusk, as from another world, above the lane and the pickaninnies naked in the dust.

"If he lives past sundown, he will live until daybreak," one said.

"Who says?"

"Talk says."

"Yao Talk says. We know but one thing." They looked at the body servant as he stood among them, his eyeballs a little luminous. He was breathing slow and deep. His chest was bare, he was sweating a little. "He knows. He knows it."

"Let us let the drums talk."

"Yao. Let the drums tell it."

The drums began after dark. They kept them hidden in the creek bottom. They were made of hollowed cypress knees, and the Negroes kept them hidden, why, none knew. They were buried in the mud on the bank of a slough, a lad of fourteen guarded them. He was undersized, and a mute, he squatted in the mud there all day, clouded over with mosquitoes, naked save for the mud with which he coated himself against the mosquitoes, and about his neck a fiber bag containing a pig's rib to which black shreds of flesh still adhered, and two scaly barks on a wire. He slobbered onto his clutched knees, drooling, now and then Indians came noiselessly out of the bushes behind him and stood there and contemplated him for a while and went away, and he never knew it.

From the loft of the stable where he lay hidden until dark and after, the Negro could hear the drums. They were three miles away, but he could hear them as though they were in the barn itself below him, thudding and thudding. It was as though he could see the fire too, and the black limbs turning into and out of the flames in copper gleams. Only there would be no fire. There would be no more light there than where he lay in the dusty loft, with the whispering arpeggios of rat feet along the warm and immemorial ax-squared rafters. The only fire there would be the smudge against mosquitoes where the women with nursing children crouched, their heavy, sluggish breasts nipped full and smooth into the mouths of men children, contemplative, oblivious of the drumming, since a fire would signify life.

There was a fire in the steamboat, where Issetibbeha lay dying among his wives, beneath the lashed girandoles and the suspended bed. He could

see the smoke, and just before sunset he saw the doctor come out, in a waistcoat made of skunk skins, and set fire to two clay-daubed sticks at the bows of the boat deck "So he is not dead yet," the Negro said into the whispering gloom of the loft, answering himself, he could hear the two voices, himself and himself

"Who not dead?"

"You are dead"

"Yao, I am dead," he said quietly He wished to be where the drums were He imagined himself springing out of the bushes, leaping among the drums on his bare, lean, greasy, invisible limbs But he could not do that, because man leaped past life, into where death was, he dashed into death and did not die because when death took a man, it took him just this side of the end of living It was when death overran him from behind, still in life The thin whisper of rat feet died in fainting gusts along the rafters Once he had eaten rat He was a boy then, but just come to America They had lived ninety days in a three-foot-high 'tween deck in tropic latitudes, hearing from topside the drunken New England captain intoning aloud from a book which he did not recognize for ten years afterward to be the Bible Squatting in the stable so, he had watched the rat, civilized, by association with man reft of its inherent cunning of limb and eye, he had caught it without difficulty, with scarce a movement of his hand, and he ate it slowly, wondering how any of the rats had escaped so long At that time he was still wearing the single white garment which the trader, a deacon in the Unitarian church, had given him, and he spoke then only his native tongue

He was naked now, save for a pair of dungaree pants bought by Indians from white men, and an amulet slung on a thong about his hips The amulet consisted of one half of a mother-of-pearl lorgnon which Issetibeha had brought back from Paris, and the skull of a cottonmouth mocassin He had killed the snake himself and eaten it, save the poison head He lay in the loft, watching the house, the steamboat, listening to the drums, thinking of himself among the drums

He lay there all night The next morning he saw the doctor come out, in his skunk vest, and get on his mule and ride away, and he became quite still and watched the final dust from beneath the mule's delicate feet die away, and then he found that he was still breathing and it seemed strange to him that he still breathed air, still needed air Then he lay and watched quietly, waiting to move, his eyeballs a little luminous, but with a quiet light, and his breathing light and regular, and saw Louis Berry come out and look at the sky It was good light then, and already five Indians squatted in their Sunday clothes along the steamboat deck, by noon there were twenty-five there That afternoon they dug the trench in which the meat would be baked, and the yams, by that time there were almost a hundred guests—decorous, quiet, patient in their stiff European finery—

and he watched Berry lead Issetibbeha's mare from the stable and tie her to a tree, and then he watched Berry emerge from the house with the old hound which lay beside Issetibbeha's chair. He tied the hound to the tree too, and it sat there, looking gravely about at the faces. Then it began to howl. It was still howling at sundown, when the Negro climbed down the back wall of the barn and entered the spring branch, where it was already dusk. He began to run then. He could hear the hound howling behind him, and near the spring, already running, he passed another Negro. The two men, the one motionless and the other running, looked for an instant at each other as though across an actual boundary between two different worlds. He ran on into full darkness, mouth closed, fists doubled, his broad nostrils bellowing steadily.

He ran on in the darkness. He knew the country well, because he had hunted it often with Issetibbeha, following on his mule the course of the fox or the cat beside Issetibbeha's mare, he knew it as well as did the men who would pursue him. He saw them for the first time shortly before sunset of the second day. He had run thirty miles then, up the creek bottom, before doubling back, lying in a pawpaw thicket he saw the pursuit for the first time. There were two of them, in shirts and straw hats, carrying their neatly rolled trousers under their arms, and they had no weapons. They were middle-aged, paunchy, and they could not have moved very fast anyway, it would be twelve hours before they could return to where he lay watching them. "So I will have until midnight to rest," he said. He was near enough to the plantation to smell the cooking fires, and he thought how he ought to be hungry, since he had not eaten in thirty hours. "But it is more important to rest," he told himself. He continued to tell himself that, lying in the pawpaw thicket, because the effort of resting, the need and the haste to rest, made his heart thud the same as the running had done. It was as though he had forgot how to rest, as though the six hours were not long enough to do it in, to remember again how to do it.

As soon as dark came he moved again. He had thought to keep going steadily and quietly through the night, since there was nowhere for him to go, but as soon as he moved he began to run at top speed, breasting his panting chest, his broad-flaring nostrils through the choked and whipping darkness. He ran for an hour, lost by then, without direction, when suddenly he stopped, and after a time his thudding heart unraveled from the sound of the drums. By the sound they were not two miles away, he followed the sound until he could smell the smudge fire and taste the acrid smoke. When he stood among them the drums did not cease, only the headman came to him where he stood in the drifting smudge, panting, his nostrils flaring and pulsing, the hushed glare of his ceaseless eyeballs in his mud-daubed face as though they were worked from lungs.

"We have expected thee," the headman said. "Go, now."

"Go?"

"Eat, and go The dead may not consort with the living, thou knowest that "

"Yao I know that " They did not look at one another The drums had not ceased

"Wilt thou eat?" the headman said

"I am not hungry I caught a rabbit this afternoon, and ate while I lay hidden "

"Take some cooked meat with thee, then "

He accepted the cooked meat, wrapped in leaves, and entered the creek bottom again, after a while the sound of the drums ceased He walked steadily until daybreak "I have twelve hours," he said "Maybe more, since the trail was followed by night " He squatted and ate the meat and wiped his hands on his thighs Then he rose and removed the dungaree pants and squatted again beside a slough and coated himself with mud—face, arms, body and legs—and squatted again, clasping his knees, his head bowed When it was light enough to see, he moved back into the swamp and squatted again and went to sleep so He did not dream at all It was well that he moved, for, waking suddenly in broad daylight and the high sun, he saw the two Indians They still carried their neatly rolled trousers, they stood opposite the place where he lay hidden, paunchy, thick, soft-looking, a little ludicrous in their straw hats and shirt tails

"This is wearying work," one said

"I'd rather be at home in the shade myself," the other said "But there is the Man waiting at the door to the earth "

"Yao " They looked quietly about, stooping, one of them removed from his shirt tail a clot of cockleburrs "Damn that Negro," he said

"Yao When have they ever been anything but a trial and care to us?"

In the early afternoon, from the top of a tree, the Negro looked down into the plantation He could see Issetibbeha's body in a hammock between the two trees where the horse and the dog were tethered, and the concourse about the steamboat was filled with wagons and horses and mules, with carts and saddlehorses, while in bright clumps the women and the smaller children and the old men squatted about the long trench where the smoke from the barbecuing meat blew slow and thick The men and the big boys would all be down there in the creek bottom behind him, on the trail, their Sunday clothes rolled carefully up and wedged into tree crotches There was a clump of men near the door to the house, to the saloon of the steamboat, though, and he watched them, and after a while he saw them bring Mocketubbe out in a litter made of buckskin and persimmon poles, high hidden in his leafed nook the Negro, the quarry, looked quietly down upon his irrevocable doom with an expression as profound as Mocketubbe's own "Yao," he said quietly "He will go then That man whose body has been dead for fifteen years, he will go also "

In the middle of the afternoon he came face to face with an Indian

They were both on a footlog across a slough—the Negro gaunt, lean, hard, tireless and desperate, the Indian thick, soft-looking, the apparent embodiment of the ultimate and the supreme reluctance and inertia. The Indian made no move, no sound, he stood on the log and watched the Negro plunge into the slough and swim ashore and crash away into the undergrowth.

Just before sunset he lay behind a down log. Up the log in slow procession moved a line of ants. He caught them and ate them slowly, with a kind of detachment, like that of a dinner guest eating salted nuts from a dish. They too had a salt taste, engendering a salivary reaction out of all proportion. He ate them slowly, watching the unbroken line move up the log and into oblivious doom with a steady and terrific undeviation. He had eaten nothing else all day, in his caked mud mask his eyes rolled in reddened rims. At sunset, creeping along the creek bank toward where he had spotted a frog, a cottonmouth moccasin slashed him suddenly across the forearm with a thick, sluggish blow. It struck clumsily, leaving two long slashes across his arm like two razor slashes, and half sprawled with its own momentum and rage, it appeared for the moment utterly helpless with its own awkwardness and choleric anger. "Ole, Grandfather," the Negro said. He touched its head and watched it slash him again across his arm, and again, with thick, raking, awkward blows. "It's that I do not wish to die," he said. Then he said it again—"It's that I do not wish to die"—in a quiet tone, of slow and low amaze, as though it were something that, until the words had said themselves, he found that he had not known, or had not known the depth and extent of his desire.

## V

Moketubbe took the slippers with him. He could not wear them very long while in motion, not even in the litter where he was slung reclining, so they rested upon a square of fawnskin upon his lap—the cracked, frail slippers a little shapeless now, with their scaled patent-leather surface and buckleless tongues and scarlet heels, lying upon the supine, obese shape just barely alive, carried through swamp and brier by swinging relays of men who bore steadily all day long the crime and its object, on the business of the slain. To Moketubbe it must have been as though, himself immortal, he were being carried rapidly through hell by doomed spirits which, alive, had contemplated his disaster, and, dead, were oblivious partners to his damnation.

After resting for a while, the litter propped in the center of the squatting circle and Moketubbe motionless in it, with closed eyes and his face at once peaceful for the instant and filled with inescapable foreknowledge, he could wear the slippers for a while. The stripling put them on him, forcing

his big, tender, dropsical feet into them, whereupon into his face came again that expression, tragic, passive, and profoundly attentive, which dyspeptics wear. Then they went on. He made no move, no sound, inert in the rhythmic litter out of some reserve of inertia, or maybe of some kingly virtue such as courage or fortitude. After a time they set the litter down and looked at him, at the yellow face like that of an idol, beaded over with sweat. Then Three Basket or Louis Berry would say "Take them off. Honor has been served." They would remove the shoes. Mocketubbe's face would not alter, but only then would his breathing become perceptible, going in and out of his pale lips with a faint ah-ah-ah sound, and they would squat again while the couriers and the runners came up.

"Not yet?"

"Not yet. He is going east. By sunset he will reach Mouth of Tippah. Then he will turn back. We may take him tomorrow."

"Let us hope so. It will not be too soon."

"Yao. It has been three days now."

"When Doom died, it took only three days."

"But that was an old man. This one is young."

"Yao. A good race. If he is taken tomorrow, I will win a horse."

"May you win it?"

"Yao. This work is not pleasant."

That was the day on which the food gave out at the plantation. The guests returned home and came back the next day with more food, enough for a week longer. On that day Issetibbeha began to smell, they could smell him for a long way up and down the bottom when it got hot toward noon and the wind blew. But they didn't capture the Negro on that day, nor on the next. It was about dusk on the sixth day when the couriers came up to the litter, they had found blood. "He has injured himself."

"Not bad, I hope," Basket said. "We cannot send with Issetibbeha one who will be of no service to him."

"Nor whom Issetibbeha himself will have to nurse and care for," Berry said.

"We do not know," the courier said. "He has hidden himself. He has crept back into the swamp. We have left pickets."

They trotted with the litter now. The place where the Negro had crept into the swamp was an hour away. In the hurry and excitement they had forgotten that Mocketubbe still wore the slippers, when they reached the place Mocketubbe had fainted. They removed the slippers and brought him to.

With dark, they formed a circle about the swamp. They squatted, clouded over with gnats and mosquitoes, the evening star burned low and close down the west, and the constellations began to wheel overhead. "We will give him time," they said. "Tomorrow is just another name for today."



"Yao Let him have time " Then they ceased, and gazed as one into the darkness where the swamp lay After a while the noise ceased, and soon the courier came out of the darkness

"He tried to break out "

"But you turned him back?"

"He turned back We feared for a moment, the three of us We could smell him creeping in the darkness, and we could smell something else, which we did not know That was why we feared, until he told us He said to slay him there, since it would be dark and he would not have to see the face when it came But it was not that which we smelled, he told us what it was A snake had struck him That was two days ago The arm swelled, and it smelled bad But it was not that which we smelled then, because the swelling had gone down and his arm was no larger than that of a child He showed us We felt the arm, all of us did, it was no larger than that of a child He said to give him a hatchet so he could chop the arm off But tomorrow is today also "

"Yao Tomorrow is today "

"We feared for a while Then he went back into the swamp "

"That is good "

"Yao We feared Shall I tell the Man?"

"I will see," Basket said He went away The courier squatted, telling again about the Negro Basket returned "The Man says that it is good Return to your post "

The courier crept away They squatted about the litter, now and then they slept Sometime after midnight the Negro waked them He began to shout and talk to himself, his voice coming sharp and sudden out of the darkness, then he fell silent Dawn came, a white crane flapped slowly across the jonquil sky Basket was awake "Let us go now," he said "It is today "

Two Indians entered the swamp, their movements noisy Before they reached the Negro they stopped, because he began to sing They could see him, naked and mud-caked, sitting on a log, singing They squatted silently a short distance away, until he finished He was chanting something in his own language, his face lifted to the rising sun His voice was clear, full, with a quality wild and sad "Let him have time," the Indians said, squatting, patient, waiting He ceased and they approached He looked back and up at them through the cracked mud mask His eyes were bloodshot, his lips cracked upon his square short teeth The mask of mud appeared to be loose on his face, as if he might have lost flesh since he put it there, he held his left arm close to his breast From the elbow down it was caked and shapeless with black mud They could smell him, a rank smell He watched them quietly until one touched him on the arm "Come," the Indian said "You ran well Do not be ashamed "

## VI

As they neared the plantation in the tainted bright morning, the Negro's eyes began to roll a little, like those of a horse. The smoke from the cooking pit blew low along the earth and upon the squatting and waiting guests about the yard and upon the steamboat deck, in their bright, stiff, harsh finery, the women, the children, the old men. They had sent couriers along the bottom, and another on ahead, and Issetibbeha's body had already been removed to where the grave waited, along with the horse and the dog, though they could still smell him in death about the house where he had lived in life. The guests were beginning to move toward the grave when the bearers of Mocketubbe's litter mounted the slope.

The Negro was the tallest there, his high, close, mud-caked head looming above them all. He was breathing hard, as though the desperate effort of the six suspended and desperate days had capitulated upon him at once, although they walked slowly, his naked scared chest rose and fell above the close-clutched left arm. He looked this way and that continuously, as if he were not seeing, as though sight never quite caught up with the looking. His mouth was open a little upon his big white teeth, he began to pant. The already moving guests halted, pausing, looking back, some with pieces of meat in their hands, as the Negro looked about at their faces with his wild, restrained, unceasing eyes.

"Will you eat first?" Basket said. He had to say it twice.

"Yes," the Negro said. "That's it. I want to eat."

The throng had begun to press back toward the center, the word passed to the outermost. "He will eat first."

They reached the steamboat. "Sit down," Basket said. The Negro sat on the edge of the deck. He was still panting, his chest rising and falling, his head ceaseless with its white eyeballs, turning from side to side. It was as if the inability to see came from within, from hopelessness, not from absence of vision. They brought food and watched quietly as he tried to eat it. He put the food into his mouth and chewed it, but chewing, the half-masticated matter began to emerge from the corners of his mouth and to drool down his chin, onto his chest, and after a while he stopped chewing and sat there, naked, covered with dried mud, the plate on his knees, and his mouth filled with a mass of chewed food, open, his eyes wide and unceasing, panting and panting. They watched him, patient, implacable, waiting.

"Come," Basket said at last.

"It's water I want," the Negro said. "I want water."

The well was a little way down the slope toward the quarters. The slope lay dappled with the shadows of noon, of that peaceful hour when, Issetibbeha napping in his chair and waiting for the noon meal and the

long afternoon to sleep in, the Negro, the body servant, would be free. He would sit in the kitchen door then, talking with the women that prepared the food. Beyond the kitchen the lane between the quarters would be quiet, peaceful, with the women talking to one another across the lane and the smoke of the dinner fires blowing upon the pickaninnies like ebony toys in the dust.

"Come," Basket said.

The Negro walked among them, taller than any. The guests were moving on toward where Issetibbeha and the horse and the dog waited. The Negro walked with his high ceaseless head, his panting chest. "Come," Basket said. "You wanted water."

"Yes," the Negro said. "Yes." He looked back at the house, then down to the quarters, where today no fire burned, no face showed in any door, no pickaninny in the dust, panting. "It struck me here, raking me across this arm, once, twice, three times. I said, 'Ole, Grandfather.'"

"Come now," Basket said. The Negro was still going through the motion of walking, his knee action high, his head high, as though he were on a treadmill. His eyeballs had a wild, restrained glare, like those of a horse. "You wanted water," Basket said. "Here it is."

There was a gourd in the well. They dipped it full and gave it to the Negro, and they watched him try to drink. His eyes had not ceased rolling as he tilted the gourd slowly against his caked face. They could watch his throat working and the bright water cascading from either side of the gourd, down his chin and breast. Then the water stopped. "Come," Basket said.

"Wait," the Negro said. He dipped the gourd again and tilted it against his face, beneath his ceaseless eyes. Again they watched his throat working and the unswallowed water sheathing broken and myriad down his chin, channeling his caked chest. They waited, patient, grave, decorous, implacable, clansman and guest and kin. Then the water ceased, though still the empty gourd tilted higher and higher, and still his black throat aped the vain motion of his frustrated swallowing. A piece of water-loosened mud carried away from his chest and broke at his muddy feet, and in the empty gourd they could hear his breath—ah-ah-ah.

"Come," Basket said, taking the gourd from the Negro and hanging it back in the well.

## COMMENT

Like London, Faulkner constructs his story around elemental conflict—man against man (and also man against nature, including at least one animal)—but, unlike "The White Silence," this story successfully transcends its plot-skeleton to become something more than simple action. Were it merely that, the reader would be interested in the answer to only one question: Will the Negro escape, or will the Indians capture him? After

the excitement of the chase, the question would be answered and the story drained of its substance. But are we really ever concerned with this question in "Red Leaves"? Doom pervades the atmosphere, and it is not long before the reader feels certain of the inevitable fate of the slave. Certainly the chase itself holds the interest, but the elements in conflict are not balanced evenly enough to arouse real doubt and hope—to tempt the reader to sneak a glance at the last page in order to satisfy his curiosity.

Rather, Faulkner builds his story so that the interest focuses not on the outcome of the chase, but on the Negro's actions and reactions, on the values and limitations of strict and unquestioning adherence to tradition, on the concrete presentation of such abstractions as pride and honor. Consider, for instance, the kind of honor represented by Mocketubbe, who painfully forces his feet into the slippers with the red heels, and the honor achieved by the Negro, who, when he walked among the Indians, was "taller than any." The one is comic, the other heroic—yet realistic, since the Negro does not face death stoically, romantically, but with dumb-struck, hypnotized terror. What heroism exists is accorded to him by his captors: "You ran well. Do not be ashamed."

Another important theme here is the contrast between past and present, the traditional and the modern. The central action is an attempt to fulfill an old tradition, and the conflict arises because the Negroes (the new order) resist. The past-present theme concerns the decadence of the old order, tainted by modern softness and corruption: the steamboat and the gilt bed have encroached on the tribal land, the Pausanian trip and the red-heeled slippers have introduced new, artificial concepts and dangerously alluring symbols into the lives of these "noble savages." The old, innocent, Adamic world in which "man was not made to sweat" and "where deer grazed like domestic cattle" has been ruined since white men "foisted their Negroes" upon the Indians. The Negroes are "savages," "without honor and without decorum," and they "cannot be expected to regard usage." Slavery and sweat have destroyed Eden. The Indians' attempts to maintain some semblance of tradition and usage are constantly thwarted by the Negroes, who try to avoid playing their part in the burial ritual. But at least the time-honored formula for royal descent ("The King is dead, long live the King") is still unbroken.

"Yao Man must die."

"Yao. Let him, there is still the Man."

"Red Leaves" is packed with implications, often made the more striking by a humorous or ironic angle of vision. For example, we are given fresh insights into such varied subjects as cannibalism, the "Negro question," segregation, disengagement (Basket and Berry refusing to "think about" what may have happened to Issetubbeha), and white supremacy ("red" supremacy in this case).

Finally, we suppose that every chase story, by the very fact that the hunted man or animal tries to escape capture and death, implies something about the value of life, of simply staying alive. But here Faulkner calls attention to this truism—reaffirms its truth—by making the quarry one of a group of slaves, "like horses and dogs," "like nothing in this sensible

world' " And this Negro slave, without past or future, acting by animal instinct, trying to explain to himself his futile running, says, " 'It's that I do not wish to die'—in a quiet tone, of slow and low amaze, as though it were something that, until the words had said themselves, he found that he had not known, or had not known the depth and extent of his desire "

## QUESTIONS ON ACTION

1 In the previous analysis, we noted that Jack London's language did not suit his subject matter. What about Faulkner's language? Is it the language of the "ideal" objective story-teller? Does he interpret events for the reader? How much at odds with the tone of the rest of the story are figures of speech like "the whispering arpeggios of rat feet" and the comparison of the Negro eating the ants to "a dinner guest eating salted nuts from a dish"?

2 Why does Faulkner feel it necessary to supply so much historical background in Section II? Do you feel that this is superfluous and that it slows down the action without sufficient reason? Could a writer of a "pure" action story afford to include this exposition? Try to account for Faulkner's practice in terms of atmosphere, theme, attitude, and implications.

3 If the lack of an ordinary name is characteristic of the mythical hero ("Malemute Kid," "Leatherstocking"), is "the Negro" raised to this level by not being more specifically identified?

4 The thematic material in "The White Silence" seems like an attempt to disguise the bare bones of action with irrelevant philosophical padding. What about the themes in "Red Leaves"? Do they break the back of the narrative? Or are they integral features of the story, part of the statement it makes? Do they *belong*?

## Other Considerations

1 The tension between descriptive language and the thing described can add a new dimension to a scene—usually, satire, parody, or irony. When Faulkner describes the expression on Mockett's face as "tragic, passive, and profoundly attentive" and the reader knows that this expression is one of near-unconsciousness caused by the Indian's squeezing his fat feet into a pair of tiny slippers, what effect is achieved? (Notice that the author seems to allow us a choice of interpretations of Mockett's uncomplaining silence: "some reserve of inertia, or maybe of some kingly virtue such as courage or fortitude.")

2 Faulkner often describes the closeness of man to nature as being an ideal state, and the separation or estrangement from nature as indicating man's loss of the primal virtues. Can you apply this idea to the scene in which the Negro, slashed by the snake, greets it with "Ole, Grandfather"? Is this a scene of identification with the snake? Of reconciliation? Does this act set the Negro apart from the Indians, or does it link him more closely with them?

3 Insofar as you understand Faulkner's purposes, see if you can account for his inclusion of the following

- (a) The Indian's admission that he has "eaten of it [Negro flesh]" when he was young
- (b) The fan-wielding stripling's realistic attitude
- (c) The Negro's detailed memory of the slave-ship
- (d) The Indians' courteous treatment of the slave in Section VI

# Character

Up to this point we have distinguished between two kinds of action stories. The first appealed to the reader who wanted simply a narrative that would engross him with little regard for meaning, the second appealed to the reader who also wanted an engrossing story, but with something more—trivial stories are demoralizing after a while. The rest of this anthology is in one sense designed to satisfy some of the other interests of the mature reader.

Character is the element with the chief interest for most of us. This is in part owing to the particularly modern preoccupation with the self, reflected historically in the Renaissance and the Reformation and more recently in depth psychology and a school of philosophy known as existentialism. The reader will see that a number of stories (for example, "The Artificial Nigger," "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," and "Death In Venice") dramatize the discovery of the self. But we are all naturally and immediately interested in people—all kinds of people: neurotic, wholesome, cruel, kind, Yankees, Southerners, Russian peasants, Negro slaves, pretty blonde waitresses, handsome fur-trappers, and gangsters. Although these are general categories, they help us to know individuals by establishing their contexts. We all represent, in fact, any number of types or categories. The same person might be an engineering student, a Baptist, a Chicagoan, a progressive-jazz fan, an extrovert, and an only child of a middle-class Republican family. These general, representative aspects set up a background so that we feel we already know something about the person. And since this is a very easy way to characterize, some writers are tempted to stop here, giving us a type, not an individual. Thus, Jack London, having described Ruth as an Indian woman in Alaska, allows her only the stereotyped qualities that the reader might have predicted: passivity, patience, fortitude, "a great love for her white lord," childlike wonder, manlike strength and courage, and an inability to comprehend anything but "macaronic jargon" and sign language. F. Scott Fitzgerald's dictum is sound: "Begin with an individual, and before you know it you find that you have created a type, begin with a type, and you find that you have created—nothing."<sup>9</sup> He was himself notable for creating individuals who yet were representative of their age, the jazz age.

How is an individual character developed? Most familiar to readers, perhaps, is the method of *exposition*. This is less effective when it is a

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<sup>9</sup> From *All The Sad Young Men* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Copyright 1926 by Charles Scribner's Sons. Reprinted by permission.

mere assertion (see page 4), as when London declares that Malemute Kid was "no tyro in the stern sorrows of the Northland." Most writers now tend to dramatize expository matter, presenting it through the action, as in "Red Leaves", even simple description can be handled this way. And it is the *action* of the entire story that is the principal, inevitable way of developing character. Although for instructive purposes we have distinguished between stories of action and those of character, we do not at all mean that character is distinct from action. On the contrary. It is a truism that character is action and action, character. And action includes not only the large, gross events, but also what a person thinks, dreams, and daydreams, how he gestures, walks, and breathes, as well as the subtle instrument of his speech, with its particular rhythms, idiom, and diction. All these go to shape character. The trick, of course, is to make each action register vividly as a quality of the man. In "Red Leaves," vivid to us are what the Negro wears as an amulet, how he breathes and sweats, his reaction to the snake's bite, how he walks among the Indians, and his last efforts to chew and drink. All these and more inform us about him. We should add that action is desirable for revealing character because it is concrete as well as dramatic. The concrete affects us more than abstract analysis can, for, after all the analysis, the concrete is still a mystery, as enduring and profound as the mystery of the concrete universe. And if action is the inevitable way of revealing character, then *contrasts* and *similarities* are the inevitable way of defining it, for example, we know Malemute Kid better through his difference from Mason. Because of its extensive use, this method of defining character will be shown in considerable detail in the analysis of "Gusev."

But stories are not character sketches, they have plots in which something happens to the person. What happens may take one of two forms that of a revelation or a transformation, or both. In Chekhov's "A Trifle From Life," the lover is suddenly revealed as indifferent to his word of honor, in "Red Leaves" the Negro slave is transformed into a hero.

Of the two selections that follow, "How It Was Done In Odessa" illustrates a story in which character is revealed in large measure through outward action, and "Gusev" one in which it is revealed largely through inward action: meditation, dreams, fantasy, and memory. This distinction points up the different kinds of action that can project character.



# How It Was Done in Odessa

Isaac Babel

It was I that began

"Reb \* Arye-Leib," I said to the old man, "let us talk of Benya Krik. Let us talk of his thunderclap beginning and his terrible end. Three big shadows block up the path of my imagination. Here is the one—Ephraim Rook. The russet steel of his actions, can it really not bear comparison with the strength of the King? Here is Nick Pakovsky. The simon-pure fury of that man held all that was necessary for him to wield power. And did not Haim Drong know how to distinguish the brilliance of a rising star? Why then did Benya Krik alone climb to the top of the ladder, while all the rest hung swaying on the lower rungs?"

Reb Arye-Leib was silent, sitting on the cemetery wall. Before him stretched the green stillness of the graves. A man who thirsts for an answer must stock himself with patience. A man possessing knowledge must be suited by dignity. For this reason Reb Arye-Leib was silent, sitting on the cemetery wall. Finally he said:

"Why he? Why not they, you wish to know? Then see here, forget for a while that you have spectacles on your nose and autumn in your hair. Cease playing the rowdy at your desk and stammering while others play about. Imagine for a moment that you play the rowdy in public places and stammer on paper. You are a tiger, you are a lion, you are a cat. You can spend the night with a Russian woman, and satisfy her. You are twenty-five. If rings were fastened to heaven and earth, you would go up to them and draw heaven and earth together. And your father is Mendel I. the drayman. What does such a father think about? He thinks about drinking a good glass of vodka, of smashing somebody in the face, of beating horses—and nothing more. You want to live, and he makes you die twice a day. What would you have done in Benya Krik's place? You would have done nothing. But *he* did something. That's why he's the King while you thumb your nose in the privy.

He—Benya Krik—went to see Ephraim Rook, who, already in those days looking at the world out of only one eye, was already then what is now. He said to Ephraim

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\* Mister

"Take me on I want to moor to your bollard The bollard I moor to will be the winning one "

Rook asked him

"Who are you, where do you come from, and what do you use for breath?"

"Give me a try, Ephraim," replied Benya, "and let us stop smearing gruel over a clean table "

"Let us stop smearing gruel," assented Rook "I'll give you a try "

And the gangsters went into conference to consider the matter of Benya Krik I wasn't at that conference, but they say that a conference was held Chairman at that time was Lyovka Bullock

What goes on under his hat, under little Benya's hat?" asked the late Bullock

And the one-eyed Rook gave his opinion

"Benya says little, but what he says is tasty He says little, and one would like him to say more "

"If so," exclaimed the late Bullock, "then let's try him on Tartakovsky "

"Let's try him on Tartakovsky," resolved the conference, and all in whom conscience still had lodgings blushed when they heard this decision Why did they blush? You will learn this if you come where I shall lead you

We used to call Tartakovsky "Jew-and-a-Half" or "Nine Holdups " "Jew-and-a-Half" he was called because no single Jew could have had so much dash and so much cash as Tartakovsky He was taller than the tallest cop in Odessa, and weighed more than the fattest of Jewesses And "Nine Holdups" he was called because the firm of Lyovka Bullock and Co had made on his office not eight nor yet ten raids, but nine precisely To the lot of Benya Krik, who was not yet the King, fell the honor of carrying out the tenth raid on Jew-and-a-Half When Ephraim informed him accordingly, he said "O K " and went out, banging the door Why bang the door? You will learn this if you come where I shall lead you

Tartakovsky has the soul of a murderer, but he is one of us He originated with us He is our blood He is our flesh, as though one momma had born us Half Odessa serves in his shops And it was through his own Moldavanka lads that he suffered Twice they held him for ransom, and once during a pogrom they buried him with a choir The Sloboda thugs were then beating up the Jews on Bolshaya Arnavtskaya Tartakovsky escaped from them, and on Sofiyskaya met a funeral procession with a choir He asked

"Who's that they're burying with a choir?"

The passers-by replied that it was Tartakovsky they were burying The procession got to the Sloboda Cemetery Then our chaps produced a machine gun from the coffin and started plastering the Sloboda thugs But

Jew-and-a-Half had not foreseen this Jew-and-a-Half was scared to death And what boss would not have been scared in his place?

The tenth raid on a man who has already once been buried was a coarse action Benya, who was not then the King, understood this better than anyone But he said "O K" to Rook, and that day wrote Tartakovsky a letter similar to all letters of this sort

"Highly respected Ruvim son of Joseph! Be kind enough to place, on Saturday, under the rain barrel, etc If you refuse, as last time you refused, know that a great disappointment awaits you in your private life Respects from the Bentzion Krik you know of"

Tartakovsky did not play the sluggard, and replied without delay

"Benya! If you were a half-wit I should write to you as to a half-wit But I do not know you as such, and God forbid I ever shall! You, it is evident, want to play the child Do you really mean you don't know that this year there is such a crop in the Argentine that there's enough to drown in, and we sitting with all our wheat and no customers? And I will tell you, hand on heart, that in my old age I am finding it tedious to swallow so bitter a piece of bread and to experience these unpleasantnesses, having worked all my life as hard as the least of draymen And what have I from all this endless convict-labor? Ulcers, sores, troubles, and insomnia Give up this nonsense, Benya Your friend (much more than you suppose) Ruvim Tartakovsky"

Jew-and-a-Half had done what he could He had written a letter But the letter wasn't delivered to the right address Receiving no reply, Benya waxed wroth Next day he turned up with four pals at Tartakovsky's office Four youths in masks and with revolvers bowled into the office

"Hands up!" they cried, and started waving their pistols about

"A little more *Sang-frwa*, Solomon," observed Benya to one who was shouting louder than the rest "Don't make a habit of being nervous on the job" And turning to the clerk, who was white as death and yellow as clay, he asked him

"Is Jew-and-a-Half on the premises?"

"No, sir," replied the clerk, one Muginstein by name His first name was Joseph, and he was the bachelor son of Aunt Pesya the poultry-dealer on Seredinskaya Square

"Well then, who's in charge in the old man's absence?" they started third-degreeing the wretched Muginstein

"I am," said the clerk, green as green grass

"Then with God's help open up the safe!" Benya ordered, and the curtain rose on a three-act opera

The nervous Solomon was packing cash, securities, watches, and monograms in a suitcase, the late Joseph stood before him with his hands in the air, and at that moment Benya was telling anecdotes about Jews

"Since he's forever playing the Rothschild," Benya was saying of Tarta-

kovsky, "let him burn on a slow fire Explain this to me, Muginstein, as to a friend if he receives, as he has, a businesslike letter from me, why shouldn't he take a five-copeck streetcar-ride and come over and see me at my place and drink a glass of vodka with my family and take potluck? What prevented him from opening his heart to me? 'Benya,' he might have said, 'so on and so forth, here's my balance-sheet, gimme a coupla days to draw breath and see how things stand' What should I have replied? Pig does not see eye to eye with pig, but man with man does Muginstein, do you catch my drift?"

"I d-do," stuttered Muginstein, but he lied, for he hadn't the remotest idea why Jew-and-a-Half the wealthy and respected should want to take a streetcar-ride to eat a snack with the family of Mendel Krik the drayman

And meantime misfortune lurked beneath the window like a pauper at daybreak Misfortune broke noisily into the office And though on this occasion it bore the shape of the Jew Savka Butsis, this misfortune was as drunk as a water-carrier

"Ho-hoo-ho," cried the Jew Savka, "forgive me, Benya, I'm late" And he started stamping his feet and waving his arms about Then he fired, and the bullet landed in Muginstein's belly

Are words necessary? A man was, and is no more A harmless bachelor was living his life like a bird on a bough, and had to meet a nonsensical end There came a Jew looking like a sailor and took a potshot not at some clay pipe or dolly but at a live man Are words necessary?

"Let's scram," cried Benya, and ran out last But as he departed he managed to say to Butsis

"I swear by my mother's grave, Savka, that you will lie next to him"

Now tell me, young master, you who snip coupons on other people's shares, how would you have acted in Benya's place? You don't know how you would have acted But he knew That's why he's the King, while you and I are sitting on the wall of the Second Jewish Cemetery and keeping the sun off with our palms

Aunt Pesya's unfortunate son did not die straightaway An hour after they had got him to the hospital, Benya appeared there He asked for the doctor in charge and the nurse to be sent out to him, and said to them, not taking his hands out of his cream pants

"It is in my interest," he said, "that the patient Joseph Muginstein should recover Let me introduce myself, just in case Bentzion Krik Camphor, air-cushions, a private ward—supply them with liberal hands Otherwise every Tom, Dick, and Harry of a doctor, even if he's a doctor of philosophy, will get no more than six feet of earth"

But Muginstein died that night And only then did Jew-and-a-Half raise a stink through all Odessa

"Where do the police begin," he wailed, "and where does Benya end?"

"The police end where Benya begins," replied sensible folk, but Tartakovsky refused to take the hint, and he lived to see the day when a red automobile with a music box for horn played its first march from the opera *Pagliacci* on Seredinskaya Square. In broad daylight the car flew up to the little house in which Aunt Pesya dwelt.

The automobile cast thunderbolts with its wheels, spat fumes, shone brassily, stank of gasoline, and performed arias on its horn. From the car someone sprang out and passed into the kitchen, where little Aunt Pesya was throwing hysterics on the earthen floor. Jew-and-a-Half was sitting in a chair waving his hands about.

"You hooligan!" he cried, perceiving the visitor, "you bandit, may the earth cast you forth! A fine trick you've thought up, killing live people."

"Monsieur Tartakovsky," Benya Krik replied quietly, "it's forty-eight hours now that I've been weeping for the dear departed as for my own brother. But I know that you don't give a damn for my youthful tears. Shame, Monsieur Tartakovsky. In what sort of safe have you locked up your sense of shame? You had the gall to send the mother of our deceased Joseph a hundred paltry roubles. My brains shivered along with my hair when I heard this."

Here Benya paused. He was wearing a chocolate jacket, cream pants, and raspberry boots.

"Ten thousand down," he roared, "ten thousand down and a pension till she dies, and may she live to a hundred and twenty. Otherwise we will depart from this residence, Monsieur Tartakovsky, and we will sit in my limousine."

Then they used bad language at one another hammer and tongs, Jew-and-a-Half and Benya. I wasn't present at this quarrel, but those who were remember it. They compromised on five thousand in cash and fifty roubles a month.

"Aunt Pesya," Benya said to the disheveled old woman who was rolling on the floor, "if you need my life you may have it, but all make mistakes, God included. A terrible mistake has been made, Aunt Pesya. But wasn't it a mistake on the part of God to settle Jews in Russia, for them to be tormented worse than in Hell? How would it hurt if the Jews lived in Switzerland, where they would be surrounded by first-class lakes, mountain air, and nothing but Frenchies? All make mistakes, God not excepted. Listen to me with all your ears, Aunt Pesya. You'll have five thousand down and fifty roubles a month till you croak. Live to a hundred and twenty if you like. Joseph shall have a Number One funeral: six horses like six lions, two carriages with flowers, the choir from the Brody Synagogue. Minkovsky in person will sing at your deceased son's funeral."

And the funeral was performed next morning. Ask the cemetery beggars

about that funeral Ask the shamessim \* from the synagogue of the dealers in kosher poultry about it, or the old women from the Second Almshouse Odessa had never before seen such a funeral, the world will never see such a funeral On that day the cops wore cotton gloves In the synagogues, decked with greenstuff and wide open, the electric lights were burning Black plumes swayed on the white horses harnessed to the hearse A choir of sixty headed the cortege a choir of boys, but they sang with the voice of women The Elders of the synagogue of the dealers in kosher poultry helped Aunt Pesya along Behind the elders walked members of the Association of Jewish Shop Assistants, and behind the Jewish Shop Assistants walked the lawyers, doctors of medicine, and certified midwives On one side of Aunt Pesya were the women who trade in poultry on the Old Market, and on the other side, draped in orange shawls, were the honorary dairymaids from Bugayevka They stamped their feet like gendarmes parading on a holiday From their wide hips wafted the odors of the sea and of milk And behind them all plodded Ruvim Tartakovsky's employees There were a hundred of them, or two hundred, or two thousand They wore black frock coats with silk lapels and new shoes that squeaked like sacked sucking-pigs

And now I will speak as the Lord God spoke on Mount Sinai from the Burning Bush Put my words in your ears All I saw, I saw with my own eyes, sitting here on the wall of the Second Cemetery next to Little Lipping Mose and Samson from the undertaker's I, Arye-Leib, saw this—I, a proud Jew dwelling by the dead

The hearse drove up to the cemetery synagogue The coffin was placed on the steps Aunt Pesya was trembling like a little bird The cantor crawled out of the carriage and began the service Sixty singers seconded him And at this moment a red automobile flew around the turning It played "Laugh, clown" and drew up People were as silent as the dead Silent were the trees, the choir, the beggars Four men climbed out of the red car and at a slow pace bore to the hearse a wreath of roses such as was never seen before And when the service ended the four men inserted their steel shoulders beneath the coffin and with burning eyes and swelling breasts walked side by side with the members of the Association of Jewish Shop Assistants

In front walked Benya Krik, whom no one as yet called the King He was the first to approach the grave He climbed the mound of earth and spread out his arms

"What have you in mind, young man?" cried Kofman of the Burial Brotherhood, running over to him

"I have it in mind to make a funeral oration," replied Benya Krik

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\* Sextons

And a funeral oration he made All who wished listened to it I listened to it, I, Arye-Leib, and Little Lissing Mose, who was sitting on the wall beside me

"Ladies and gentlemen, and dames," said Benya Krik "Ladies and gentlemen, and dames," said he, and the sun rose above his head like an armed sentry "You have come to pay your last respects to a worthy laborer who perished for the sake of a copper penny In my name, and in the name of all those not here present, I thank you Ladies and gentlemen! What did our dear Joseph get out of life? Nothing worth mentioning How did he spend his time? Counting other people's cash What did he perish for? He perished for the whole of the working class There are people already condemned to death, and there are people who have not yet begun to live And lo and behold a bullet flying into a condemned breast pierces our Joseph, who in his whole life had seen nothing worth mentioning, and comes out on the other side There are people who know how to drink vodka, and there are people who don't know how to drink vodka but drink it all the same And the first lot, you see, get satisfaction from joy and from sorrow, and the second lot suffer for all those who drink vodka without knowing how to And so, ladies and gentlemen, and dames, after we have said a prayer for our poor Joseph I will ask you to accompany to his last resting-place one unknown to you but already deceased, one Savely Butsis "

And having finished his oration Benya Krik descended from the mound No sound came from the people, the trees, or the cemetery beggars Two gravediggers bore an unpainted coffin to the next grave The cantor, stammering, finished his prayers Benya threw in the first spadeful of soil and crossed over to Savka's grave After him like sheep went all the lawyers, all the ladies with brooches He made the cantor sing the full funeral service over Savka, and the sixty choirboys seconded the cantor Savka had never dreamed of having such a funeral—take it from Arye-Leib, an old man who has seen many things

They say that on that day Jew-and-a-Half decided to shut up shop I wasn't present But that neither the cantor, nor the choir, nor the Funeral Brotherhood charged anything for the funeral, this I saw with the eyes of Arye-Leib Arye-Leib, that's what they call me And more than that I couldn't see, for the people, creeping quietly at first from Savka's grave, then started running as from a house on fire They flew off in carriages, in carts, and on foot And only the four who had driven up in the red automobile also drove off in it The music box played its march, the car shuddered and was gone

"A King," said Little Lissing Mose, looking after the car—Little Mose who does me out of the best seats on the wall

Now you know all You know who first uttered the word 'King' It was Little Mose You know why he didn't give that name to One-Eyed

Rook, or to Crazy Nick You know all But what's the use, if you still have spectacles on your nose and autumn in your heart?"

### COMMENT

In this story what obviously attracted Babel was the person, Benya Krik, modelled after a real Odessa gangster Of course, Babel was drawn to Benya because he was a man of action, one who could "play the rowdy in public places" The action is magnificent It begins with a task so difficult that even the gangsters blushed, moves through the complication of the murder and the extraction of the proper compensation for Aunt Pesya, and concludes with the climax of the gaudy funeral and the equally gaudy oration But the action—his career from initiate to king—is there to reveal Benya's character

Yet the reader will be deceived if he stops at the surface action in his attempt to understand Benya Babel uses other means to give density and significance to his characterization, and we will develop a few here There is, first, the *perspective* from which the story is told, the recollections of an old man, Reb Arye-Leib As old people like to do, he sits down one quiet afternoon to talk about Benya with the same awe and admiration that old men in our West once talked about outlaws like Jesse James Benya is transformed by the folklorist of the Moldavanka from a gangster into a folk hero Telling the tale through the old man establishes a time perspective Seen by him in retrospect, at a distance from the actual event, Benya is naturally magnified in the minds of both teller and audience

One principal way of defining a character is to contrast him with others Benya stands out among the other gangsters, even among his superiors But there is one contrast, between Benya and the first-person narrator, a writer to whom the story is told, which calls for particular attention It would seem as though the only reason for having a writer as the audience was to indicate how the story was heard and happened to be set down This indeed gives the subject an air of reality, but we know that this strategy is an artifice, one of many an author uses to *create*, not reproduce reality (It is an artifice even when, as in Babel's case, the author heard or witnessed the events he writes about) A more important reason lies in the significance of the writer's relation to Benya, one which might be easily overlooked He is an artist, a man of thought as well as imagination, indeed, too much thought and imagination and too little action, as we are made to understand when the old man beautifully chides him to "forget for a while that you have spectacles on your nose and autumn in your heart [a passage important enough to be repeated as the closing line] Cease playing the rowdy at your desk and stammering while others are about" The significance of the relation lies in the fact that the artist is another kind of hero, a culture hero (using culture in the narrow sense) like Goethe or T S Eliot Thus, two kinds of heroes, one of the folk and one of the cultural elite, are being posed against each other The contrast dramatizes the difference between the man of action and the man of thought And the man of thought does not come out very well As Reb



Arye-Leib declares, where Benya Krik “did something” about his brutal father, the writer would probably only “thumb your nose in the privy.” The writer serves as a foil for Benya, the shortcomings of the culture hero magnify the folk hero.

The perspective of the old man and the contrast with the writer are both realized through the narrative frame. From this we can see that the author’s narrative strategy (the frame) is not a technical “gimmick,” but integral to the meaning of the story. It is one of the ways the total meaning is expressed.

Although the story is told by the old folklorist, it would be a mistake to conclude that we have a spontaneous, naive folk tale, the kind passed down orally from generation to generation, familiar to us in the legends of Paul Bunyan and Davy Crockett. From our analysis of some of Babel’s strategies we see, instead, that we have a deliberate, sophisticated story, what we may call a literary folk tale. We might expect, then, that while the story will contain audacious, fabulous actions, it will not stop with a simple attitude towards the folk hero.

If we look more closely, we see that while Babel admires Benya, he cannot help smiling at him too. Generally, we may say that a person is comic who is incongruous, absurd, or excessively different from the normal. Thus the comic is inherent in the fabulous, in the difference between our normal ways and those of the hero. Babel works these differences thoroughly, as in Benya’s absurd car and clothes, and his sensitivity to justice, honor, and death—he weeps forty-eight hours for “the dear departed.” And through this complication of attitude—a combination of admiration and affectionate, comic irony—Babel gives further density to his creation.

The phrase “the dear departed” leads us directly to the question of Benya’s style. We are familiar with the dictum that style is the man, and we see it clearly illustrated not only in the sure flourish of Benya’s actions, unquestionably those of a leader, a king, but also in his rampant language. It is here, in the handling of the delicate instrument of language, that a writer encounters one of his most severe artistic tests, and it is precisely here that Babel manages his most brilliant delineation of Benya’s comic-fabulous character. Two examples will suffice. “The dear departed” is comic not only in its stilted, un-gangsterish language, but also because it is trite and euphemistic. The trite and euphemistic are comic in a moment of emotion since they are out of place, absurd (and of course painful in their falsity). Babel renders Benya’s insensitivity to language doubly comic again, in the next line, when Benya cries to Tartakovsky, “But I know that you don’t give a damn for my youthful tears.” Here genuine emotion, capped by forthright slang, is abruptly adulterated by the lapse into stilted, “poetic” sentimentality (“my youthful tears”). We might describe Benya’s style as literary, in itself comic in a gangster. But it is literary in a bookish, awkward way, and this adds to the comic effect. Then, too, the funeral oration is filled with the devices of the finished public speaker: rhetorical questions, exclamations, parallel phrasing, variations in sentence length, and inversions of syntax. Yet, if it is not to be misunderstood, it must be read as a magnificent, if unconscious parody of funeral cant. Benya’s

verbal style, we see, is another reflection of both his fabulous and comic aspects, another way of realizing his character. Babel's achievement is this: he renders the fabulous in complex as well as simple terms.

## QUESTIONS ON CHARACTER

1 What are some other evidences of Benya's comic side? Consider, for example, the style of his letter to Tartakovsky and his business methods.

2 Character is suggested through metaphor, and Babel has many metaphors for Benya. How do these affect our sense of Benya? Should they be taken at all ambiguously?

3 What other ways of revealing character do we find in this story? Are there any mythological allusions?

4 Even before we see Benya in action we have a strong impression of him through the use of exposition. Is this presented abstractly or concretely? Is it dramatized or merely stated?

## *Other Considerations*

1 It might be useful to test and expand our definition of the comic by applying it to stories like "Madame Tellier's Excursion," "Eternal Life," and "The Fairy Goose," as well as to others usually not considered comic, like "The Judgment" and "Red Leaves."

2 The reader has probably made some comparisons between Babel's treatment of a gangster and that of Hollywood and cheap paperback fiction. (For the sake of scope, the teen-age rebel and delinquent may also be brought in.) Newspapers, magazines, and textbooks stress psychological and sociological factors. Do these play a role in Babel? In Hollywood? Both Babel and Hollywood have created gangster myths. Compare the use of glamor and violence.

3 Since Babel and Hollywood both make heroes of gangsters, are they immoral? Consider the question of artistic morality, of fidelity to one's conception.

4 What is the effect of the narrator's setting?

It is already dark, it will soon be night

Gusev, a discharged private, half rises in his bunk and says in a low voice

"Do you hear me, Pavel Ivanych? A soldier in Suchan was telling me while they were sailing, their ship bumped into a big fish and smashed a hole in its bottom"

The individual of uncertain social status whom he is addressing, and whom everyone in the ship infirmary calls Pavel Ivanych, is silent as though he hasn't heard

And again all is still The wind is flirting with the rigging, the screw is throbbing, the waves are lashing, the bunks creak, but the ear has long since become used to these sounds, and everything around seems to slumber in silence It is dull The three invalids—two soldiers and a sailor—who were playing cards all day are dozing and talking deliriously

The ship is apparently beginning to roll The bunk slowly rises and falls under Gusev as though it were breathing, and this occurs once, twice, three times Something hits the floor with a clang a jug must have dropped

"The wind has broken loose from its chain," says Gusev, straining his ears

This time Pavel Ivanych coughs and says irritably

"One minute a vessel bumps into a fish, the next the wind breaks loose from its chain Is the wind a beast that it breaks loose from its chain?"

"That's what Christian folks say"

"They are as ignorant as you They say all sorts of things One must have one's head on one's shoulders and reason it out You have no sense"

Pavel Ivanych is subject to seasickness When the sea is rough he is usually out of sorts, and the merest trifle irritates him In Gusev's opinion there is absolutely nothing to be irritated about What is there that is strange or out of the way about that fish, for instance, or about the wind breaking loose from its chain? Suppose the fish were as big as the mountain and its back as hard as a sturgeon's, and supposing, too, that

over yonder at the end of the world stood great stone walls and the fierce winds were chained up to the walls. If they haven't broken loose, why then do they rush all over the sea like madmen and strain like hounds tugging at their leash? If they are not chained up what becomes of them when it is calm?

Gusev ponders for a long time about fishes as big as a mountain and about stout, rusty chains. Then he begins to feel bored and falls to thinking about his home, to which he is returning after five years' service in the Far East. He pictures an immense pond covered with drifts. On one side of the pond is the brick-colored building of the pottery with a tall chimney and clouds of black smoke, on the other side is a village. His brother Alexey drives out of the fifth yard from the end in a sleigh, behind him sits his little son Vanka in big felt boots, and his little girl Akulka also wearing felt boots. Alexey has had a drop, Vanka is laughing, Akulka's face cannot be seen, she is muffled up.

"If he doesn't look out, he will have the children frostbitten," Gusev reflects. "Lord send them sense that they may honor their parents and not be any wiser than their father and mother."

"They need new soles," a delirious sailor says in a bass voice. "Yes, yes!"

Gusev's thoughts abruptly break off and suddenly without rhyme or reason the pond is replaced by a huge bull's head without eyes, and the horse and sleigh are no longer going straight ahead but are whirling round and round, wrapped in black smoke. But still he is glad he has had a glimpse of his people. In fact, he is breathless with joy, and his whole body, down to his fingertips, tingles with it. "Thanks be to God we have seen each other again," he mutters deliriously, but at once opens his eyes and looks for water in the dark.

He drinks and lies down, and again the sleigh is gliding along, then again there is the bull's head without eyes, smoke, clouds. And so it goes till daybreak.

## II

A blue circle is the first thing to become visible in the darkness—it is the porthole, then, little by little, Gusev makes out the man in the next bunk, Pavel Ivanych. The man sleeps sitting up, as he cannot breathe lying down. His face is gray, his nose long and sharp, his eyes look huge because he is terribly emaciated, his temples are sunken, his beard skimpy, his hair long. His face does not reveal his social status; you cannot tell whether he is a gentleman, a merchant, or a peasant. Judging from his expression and his long hair, he may be an assiduous churchgoer or a lay brother, but his manner of speaking does not seem to be that of a monk. He is utterly worn out by his cough, by the stifling heat, his illness, and he

breathes with difficulty, moving his parched lips. Noticing that Gusev is looking at him he turns his face toward him and says

"I begin to guess      Yes, I understand it all perfectly now "

"What do you understand, Pavel Ivanych?"

"Here's how it is      It has always seemed strange to me that terribly ill as you fellows are, you should be on a steamer where the stifling air, the heavy seas, in fact everything, threatens you with death, but now it is all clear to me      Yes      The doctors put you on the steamer to get rid of you. They got tired of bothering with you, cattle.      You don't pay them any money, you are a nuisance, and you spoil their statistics with your deaths.      So, of course, you are just cattle. And it's not hard to get rid of you.      All that's necessary is, in the first place, to have no conscience or humanity, and, secondly, to deceive the ship authorities. The first requirement need hardly be given a thought—in that respect we are virtuosos, and as for the second condition, it can always be fulfilled with a little practice. In a crowd of four hundred healthy soldiers and sailors, five sick ones are not conspicuous, well, they got you all onto the steamer, mixed you with the healthy ones, hurriedly counted you over, and in the confusion nothing untoward was noticed, and when the steamer was on the way, people discovered that there were paralytics and consumptives on their last legs lying about the deck. "

Gusev does not understand Pavel Ivanych, thinking that he is being reprimanded, he says in self-justification

"I lay on the deck because I was so sick, when we were being unloaded from the barge onto the steamer, I caught a bad chill. "

"It's revolting," Pavel Ivanych continues. "The main thing is, they know perfectly well that you can't stand the long journey and yet they put you here. Suppose you last as far as the Indian Ocean, and then what? It's horrible to think of.      And that's the gratitude for your faithful, irreproachable service!"

Pavel Ivanych's eyes flash with anger. He frowns fastidiously and says, gasping for breath, "Those are the people who ought to be given a drubbing in the newspapers till the feathers fly in all directions. "

The two sick soldiers and the sailor have waked up and are already playing cards. The sailor is half reclining in his bunk, the soldiers are sitting near by on the floor in most uncomfortable positions. One of the soldiers has his right arm bandaged and his wrist is heavily swathed in wrappings that look like a cap, so that he holds his cards under his right arm or in the crook of his elbow while he plays with his left. The ship is rolling heavily. It is impossible to stand up, or have tea, or take medicine.

"Were you an orderly?" Pavel Ivanych asks Gusev.

"Yes, sir, an orderly. "

"My God, my God!" says Pavel Ivanych and shakes his head sadly. "To

tear a man from his home, drag him a distance of ten thousand miles, then wear him out till he gets consumption and        and what is it all for, one asks? To turn him into an orderly for some Captain Kopeykin or Midshipman Dyrka! How reasonable!"

"It's not hard work, Pavel Ivanych. You get up in the morning and polish the boots, start the samovars going, tidy the rooms, and then you have nothing more to do. The lieutenant drafts plans all day, and if you like, you can say your prayers, or read a book or go out on the street. God grant everyone such a life."

"Yes, very good! The lieutenant drafts plans all day long, and you sit in the kitchen and long for home. Plans, indeed! It's not plans that matter but human life. You have only one life to live and it mustn't be wronged."

"Of course, Pavel Ivanych, a bad man gets no break anywhere, either at home or in the service, but if you live as you ought and obey orders, who will want to wrong you? The officers are educated gentlemen, they understand. In five years I have never once been in the guard house, and I was struck, if I remember right, only once."

"What for?"

"For fighting. I have a heavy hand, Pavel Ivanych. Four Chinks came into our yard, they were bringing firewood or something, I forget. Well, I was bored and I knocked them about a bit, the nose of one of them, damn him, began bleeding. The lieutenant saw it all through the window, got angry, and boxed me on the ear."

"You are a poor, foolish fellow," whispers Pavel Ivanych. "You don't understand anything."

He is utterly exhausted by the rolling of the ship and shuts his eyes, now his head drops back, now it sinks forward on his chest. Several times he tries to lie down but nothing comes of it. He finds it difficult to breathe.

"And what did you beat up the four Chinks for?" he asks after a while.

"Oh, just like that. They came into the yard and I hit them."

There is silence. The card-players play for two hours, eagerly, swearing sometimes, but the rolling and pitching of the ship overcomes them, too, they throw aside the cards and lie down. Again Gusev has a vision: the big pond, the pottery, the village. Once more the sleigh is gliding along, once more Vanka is laughing and Akulka, the silly thing, throws open her fur coat and thrusts out her feet, as much as to say: "Look, good people, my felt boots are not like Vanka's, they're new ones."

"Going on six, and she has no sense yet," Gusev mutters in his delirium. "Instead of showing off your boots you had better come and get your soldier uncle a drink. I'll give you a present."

And here is Andron with a flintlock on his shoulder, carrying a hare he has killed, and behind him is the decrepit old Jew Isaychuk, who offers him

a piece of soap in exchange for the hare, and here is the black calf in the entry, and Domna sewing a shirt and crying about something, and then again the bull's head without eyes, black smoke

Someone shouts overhead, several sailors run by, it seems that something bulky is being dragged over the deck, something falls with a crash. Again some people run by. Has there been an accident? Gusev raises his head, listens, and sees that the two soldiers and the sailor are playing cards again, Pavel Ivanych is sitting up and moving his lips. It is stifling, you haven't the strength to breathe, you are thirsty, the water is warm, disgusting. The ship is still rolling and pitching.

Suddenly something strange happens to one of the soldiers playing cards. He calls hearts diamonds, gets muddled over his score, and drops his cards, then with a frightened, foolish smile looks round at all of them.

"I shan't be a minute, fellows," he says, and lies down on the floor.

Everybody is nonplussed. They call to him, he does not answer.

"Stepan, maybe you are feeling bad, eh?" the soldier with the bandaged arm asks him. "Perhaps we had better call the priest, eh?"

"Have a drink of water, Stepan," says the sailor. "Here, brother, drink."

"Why are you knocking the jug against his teeth?" says Gusev angrily. "Don't you see, you cabbage-head?"

"What?"

"What?" Gusev mimicks him. "There is no breath in him, he's dead! That's what! Such stupid people, Lord God!"

### III

The ship has stopped rolling and Pavel Ivanych is cheerful. He is no longer cross. His face wears a boastful, challenging, mocking expression. It is as though he wants to say: "Yes, right away I'll tell you something that will make you burst with laughter." The round porthole is open and a soft breeze is blowing on Pavel Ivanych. There is a sound of voices, the splash of oars in the water. Just under the porthole someone is droning in a thin, disgusting voice, must be a Chinaman singing.

"Here we are in the harbor," says Pavel Ivanych with a mocking smile. "Only another month or so and we shall be in Russia. M'yes, messieurs of the armed forces! I'll arrive in Odessa and from there go straight to Kharkov. In Kharkov I have a friend, a man of letters. I'll go to him and say, 'Come, brother, put aside your vile subjects, women's amours and the beauties of Nature, and show up the two-legged vermin.' There's a subject for you."

For a while he reflects, then says

"Gusev, do you know how I tricked them?"

"Tricked who, Pavel Ivanych?"

"Why, these people      You understand, on this steamer there is only a first class and a third class, and they only allow peasants, that is, the common herd, to go in the third. If you have got a jacket on and even at a distance look like a gentleman or a bourgeois, you have to go first class, if you please. You must fork out five hundred rubles if it kills you. 'Why do you have such a regulation?' I ask them. 'Do you mean to raise the prestige of the Russian intelligentsia thereby?' 'Not a bit of it. We don't let you simply because a decent person can't go third class, it is too horrible and disgusting there.' 'Yes, sir? Thank you for being so solicitous about decent people's welfare. But in any case, whether it's nasty there or nice, I haven't got five hundred rubles. I didn't loot the Treasury, I didn't exploit the natives, I didn't traffic in contraband, I flogged nobody to death, so judge for yourselves if I have the right to occupy a first class cabin and even to reckon myself among the Russian intelligentsia.' But logic means nothing to them. So I had to resort to fraud. I put on a peasant coat and high boots, I pulled a face so that I looked like a common drunk, and went to the agents. 'Give us a little ticket, your Excellency,' said I—"

"You're not of the gentry, are you?" asked the sailor.

"I come of a clerical family. My father was a priest, and an honest one, he always told the high and mighty the truth to their faces and, as a result, he suffered a great deal."

Pavel Ivanych is exhausted from talking and gasps for breath, but still continues.

"Yes, I always tell people the truth to their faces. I'm not afraid of anyone or anything. In this respect, there is a great difference between me and all of you, men. You are dark people, blind, crushed, you see nothing and what you do see, you don't understand.      You are told that the wind breaks loose from its chain, that you are beasts, savages, and you believe it, someone gives it to you in the neck—you kiss his hand, some animal in a racoon coat robs you and then tosses you a fifteen-kopeck tip and you say 'Let me kiss your hand, sir.' You are outcasts, pitiful wretches. I am different, my mind is clear. I see it all plainly like a hawk or an eagle when it hovers over the earth, and I understand everything. I am protest personified. I see tyranny—I protest. I see a hypocrite—I protest, I see a triumphant swine—I protest. And I cannot be put down, no Spanish Inquisition can silence me. No. Cut out my tongue and I will protest with gestures. Wall me up in a cellar—I will shout so that you will hear me half a mile away, or will starve myself to death, so that they may have another weight on their black consciences. Kill me and I will haunt them. All my acquaintances say to me 'You are a most insufferable person, Pavel Ivanych.' I am proud of such a reputation. I served three years in the Far East and I shall be remembered there a hundred years. I had rows there



with everybody My friends wrote to me from Russia 'Don't come back,' but here I am going back to spite them Yes That's life as I understand it That's what one can call life "

Gusev is not listening, he is looking at the porthole A junk, flooded with dazzling hot sunshine, is swaying on the transparent turquoise water In it stand naked Chinamen, holding up cages with canaries in them and calling out "It sings, it sings!"

Another boat knocks against it, a steam cutter glides past Then there s another boat a fat Chinaman sits in it, eating rice with chopsticks The water sways lazily, white sea gulls languidly hover over it

"Would be fine to give that fat fellow one in the neck," reflects Gusev, looking at the stout Chinaman and yawning

He dozes off and it seems to him that all nature is dozing too Time flies swiftly by Imperceptibly the day passes Imperceptibly darkness descends The steamer is no longer standing still but is on the move again

#### IV

Two days pass Pavel Ivanych no longer sits up but is lying down His eyes are closed, his nose seems to have grown sharper

"Pavel Ivanych," Gusev calls to him "Hey, Pavel Ivanych "

Pavel Ivanych opens his eyes and moves his lips

"Are you feeling bad?"

"No It's nothing " answers Pavel Ivanych gasping for breath "Nothing, on the contrary I am better You see, I can lie down now I have improved "

"Well, thank God for that, Pavel Ivanych "

"When I compare myself to you, I am sorry for you, poor fellows My lungs are healthy, mine is a stomach cough I can stand hell, let alone the Red Sea Besides, I take a critical attitude toward my illness and the medicines While you— Your minds are dark It's hard on you, very, very hard!"

The ship is not rolling, it is quiet, but as hot and stifling as a Turkish bath, it is hard, not only to speak, but even to listen Gusev hugs his knees, lays his head on them and thinks of his home God, in this stifling heat, what a relief it is to think of snow and cold! You're driving in a sleigh, all of a sudden, the horses take fright at something and bolt Careless of the road, the ditches, the gullies, they tear like mad things right through the village, across the pond, past the pottery, across the open fields "Hold them!" the pottery hands and the peasants they meet shout at the top of their voices "Hold them!" But why hold them? Let the keen cold wind beat in your face and bite your hands, let the lumps of snow, kicked up by the horses, slide down your collar, your neck, your chest, let the runners sing, and the traces and the whippetrees break, the devil take them And

what delight when the sleigh upsets and you go flying full tilt into a drift, face right in the snow, and then you get up, white all over with icicles on your mustache, no cap, no gloves, your belt undone      People laugh, dogs bark

Pavel Ivanych half opens one eye, fixes Gusev with it and asks softly "Gusev, did your commanding officer steal?"

"Who can tell, Pavel Ivanych? We can't say, we didn't hear about it "

And after that, a long time passes in silence Gusev broods, his mind wanders, and he keeps drinking water it is hard for him to talk and hard for him to listen, and he is afraid of being talked to An hour passes, a second, a third, evening comes, then night, but he doesn't notice it, he sits up and keeps dreaming of the frost

There is a sound as though someone were coming into the infirmary, voices are heard, but five minutes pass and all is quiet again

"The kingdom of Heaven be his and eternal peace," says the soldier with a bandaged arm "He was an uneasy chap "

"What?" asks Gusev "Who?"

"He died, they have just carried him up "

"Oh, well," mutters Gusev, yawning, "the kingdom of Heaven be his "

"What do you think, Gusev?" the soldier with the bandaged arm says after a while "Will he be in the kingdom of Heaven or not?"

"Who do you mean?"

"Pavel Ivanych "

"He will      He suffered so long Then again, he belonged to the clergy and priests have a lot of relatives Their prayers will get him there "

The soldier with the bandage sits down on Gusev's bunk and says in an undertone

"You too, Gusev, aren't long for this world You will never get to Russia "

"Did the doctor or the nurse say so?" asks Gusev

"It isn't that they said so, but one can see it It's plain when a man will die soon You don't eat, you don't drink, you've got so thin it's dreadful to look at you It's consumption, in a word I say it not to worry you, but because maybe you would like to receive the sacrament and extreme unction And if you have any money, you had better turn it over to the senior officer "

"I haven't written home," Gusev sighs "I shall die and they won't know "

"They will," the sick sailor says in a bass voice "When you die, they will put it down in the ship's log, in Odessa they will send a copy of the entry to the army authorities, and they will notify your district board or somebody like that "

Such a conversation makes Gusev uneasy and a vague craving begins to torment him He takes a drink—it isn't that, he drags himself to the

porthole and breathes the hot, moist air—it isn't that, he tries to think of home, of the frost—it isn't that At last it seems to him that if he stays in the infirmary another minute, he will certainly choke to death

"It's stifling, brother," he says "I'll go on deck Take me there, for Christ's sake "

"All right," the soldier with the bandage agrees "You can't walk, I'll carry you Hold on to my neck "

Gusev puts his arm around the soldier's neck, the latter places his uninjured arm round him and carries him up On the deck, discharged soldiers and sailors are lying asleep side by side, there are so many of them it is difficult to pass

"Get down on the floor," the soldier with the bandage says softly "Follow me quietly, hold on to my shirt "

It is dark, there are no lights on deck or on the masts or anywhere on the sea around On the prow the seaman on watch stands perfectly still like a statue, and it looks as though he, too, were asleep The steamer seems to be left to its own devices and to be going where it pleases

"Now they'll throw Pavel Ivanych into the sea," says the soldier with the bandage, "in a sack and then into the water "

"Yes, that's the regulation "

"At home, it's better to lie in the earth Anyway, your mother will come to the grave and shed a tear "

"Sure "

There is a smell of dung and hay With drooping heads, steers stand at the ship's rail One, two, three—eight of them! And there's a pony Gusev puts out his hand to stroke it, but it shakes its head, shows its teeth, and tries to bite his sleeve

"Damn brute!" says Gusev crossly

The two of them thread their way to the prow, then stand at the rail, peering Overhead there is deep sky, bright stars, peace and quiet, exactly as at home in the village But below there is darkness and disorder Tall waves are making an uproar for no reason Each one of them as you look at it is trying to rise higher than all the rest and to chase and crush its neighbor, it is thunderously attacked by a third wave that has a gleaming white mane and is just as ferocious and ugly

The sea has neither sense nor pity If the steamer had been smaller not made of thick iron plates, the waves would have crushed it without the slightest remorse, and would have devoured all the people in it without distinguishing between saints and sinners The steamer's expression was equally senseless and cruel This beaked monster presses forward, cutting millions of waves in its path, it fears neither darkness nor the wind, nor space, nor solitude—it's all child's play for it, and if the ocean had its population, this monster would crush it, too, without distinguishing between saints and sinners

"Where are we now?" asks Gusev

"I don't know Must be the ocean "

"You can't see land "

"No chance of it! They say we'll see it only in seven days "

The two men stare silently at the white phosphorescent foam and brood  
Gusev is first to break the silence

"There is nothing frightening here," he says "Only you feel queer as if you were in a dark forest, but if, let's say, they lowered the boat this minute and an officer ordered me to go fifty miles across the sea to catch fish, I'll go Or, let's say, if a Christian were to fall into the water right now, I'd jump in after him A German or a Chink I wouldn't try to save, but I'd go in after a Christian "

"And are you afraid to die?"

"I am I am sorry about the farm My brother at home, you know, isn't steady, he drinks, he beats his wife for no reason, he doesn't honor his father and mother Without me everything will go to rack and ruin, and before long it's my fear that my father and old mother will be begging their bread But my legs won't hold me up, brother, and it's stifling here Let's go to sleep "

v

Gusev goes back to the infirmary and gets into his bunk He is again tormented by a vague desire and he can't make out what it is that he wants There is a weight on his chest, a throbbing in his head, his mouth is so dry that it is difficult for him to move his tongue He dozes and talks in his sleep and, worn out with nightmares, with coughing and the stifling heat, towards morning he falls into a heavy sleep He dreams that they have just taken the bread out of the oven in the barracks and that he has climbed into the oven and is having a steam bath there, lashing himself with a besom of birch twigs He sleeps for two days and on the third at noon two sailors come down and carry him out of the infirmary He is sewn up in sailcloth and to make him heavier, they put two gridirons in with him Sewn up in sailcloth, he looks like a carrot or a radish broad at the head and narrow at the feet Before sunset, they carry him on deck and put him on a plank One end of the plank lies on the ship's rail, the other on a box placed on a stool Round him stand the discharged soldiers and the crew with heads bared

"Blessed is our God," the priest begins, "now, and ever, and unto ages of ages "

"Amen," three sailors chant

The discharged men and the crew cross themselves and look off at the waves It is strange that a man should be sewn up in sailcloth and should

soon be flying into the sea Is it possible that such a thing can happen to anyone?

The priest strews earth upon Gusev and makes obeisance to him The men sing "Memory Eternal "

The seaman on watch duty raises the end of the plank, Gusev slides off it slowly and then flying, head foremost, turns over in the air and—plop! Foam covers him, and for a moment, he seems to be wrapped in lace, but the instant passes and he disappears in the waves

He plunges rapidly downward Will he reach the bottom? At this spot the ocean is said to be three miles deep After sinking sixty or seventy feet, he begins to descend more and more slowly, swaying rhythmically as though in hesitation, and, carried along by the current, moves faster laterally than vertically

And now he runs into a school of fish called pilot fish Seeing the dark body, the little fish stop as though petrified and suddenly all turn round together and disappear In less than a minute they rush back at Gusev, swift as arrows and begin zigzagging round him in the water Then another dark body appears It is a shark With dignity and reluctance, seeming not to notice Gusev, as it were, it swims under him, then while he, moving downward, sinks upon its back, the shark turns, belly upward, basks in the warm transparent water and languidly opens its jaws with two rows of teeth The pilot fish are in ecstasy, they stop to see what will happen next After playing a little with the body, the shark nonchalantly puts his jaws under it, cautiously touches it with his teeth and the sail-cloth is ripped from the full length of the body, from head to foot, one of the gridirons falls out, frightens the pilot fish and striking the shark on the flank, sinks rapidly to the bottom

Meanwhile, up above, in that part of the sky where the sun is about to set, clouds are massing, one resembling a triumphal arch, another a lion, a third a pair of scissors A broad shaft of green light issues from the clouds and reaches to the middle of the sky, a while later, a violet beam appears alongside of it and then a golden one and a pink one The heavens turn a soft lilac tint Looking at this magnificent enchanting sky, the oceans frowns at first, but soon it, too, takes on tender, joyous, passionate colors for which it is hard to find a name in the language of man

## COMMENT

"Gusev" is a classic example of the story in which very little apparently happens Here character is revealed principally through inward action (meditation, recollection, and fantasy), with only conversation supplying most of the surface Now the kind of action in a story is not a matter of chance, but is determined by the nature of the characters In "How It Was Done in Odessa" Benya Krik is a young man climbing on a throne, and

so naturally given to large, public actions, Gusev, on the other hand, is a dying peasant not much given to talk, more naturally revealed through his long silences. Chekhov's technique is a counterpoint of silence and speech, reflection and dialogue. And if the way a story is told is determined by the character, then the way also reveals character.

The story is built around a contrast, that between Gusev and his companion Pavel. Our impression of Gusev's modesty, conversational brevity, and general acquiescence is reinforced by the strong contrast with Pavel, whose raging protests are more often speeches than conversation. This surface difference reflects more profound ones, and these might be understood in terms of the degree of community each has with things. Gusev is at home in the army or on shipboard, Pavel is alienated from the army, and is seasick. Gusev is rooted in tradition and a faith in authority (he hopes that the children "may honor their parents and not be any wiser than their father and mother"), Pavel has no use for either. Pavel is one kind of modern intellectual, the abstract man divorced from the past, from present institutions, and from nature, Gusev is the "natural man," habituated to the hardships of nature, taking them and all other hardships as a matter of course. He has learned to accept the conditions of life, while Pavel only protests against them. The consequence of *only* protesting would seem to be the separation or alienation of a man from everything, including himself.

Can we charge Chekhov with presenting stereotypes of the likeable, simple peasant and the unlikeable intellectual, or with romanticizing the man of nature as against the man of thought? This is doubtful, for Chekhov is critical of Gusev too—of his narrow nationalism, superstition, and blind acceptance of all things as they are. Rightly, however, his criticism takes the tone of the gentlest possible irony, for Gusev is not willfully bad—his few deplorable attitudes are part of the natural order of his world.

Pavel serves as a *foil* to Gusev, a closer look at him will lead us, by contrast, to a further understanding of Gusev. The differences we now point out are apparently in Pavel's favor. Gusev is a superstitious peasant, Pavel one of the enlightened intelligentsia, Gusev is filled with national and race prejudices, Pavel has none, Gusev worries only about his family, Pavel about mankind, protesting violently against all sorts of tyranny. From our modern point of view, the liberal Pavel should attract us and Gusev should repel us, yet this is not what we feel. There is apparently no necessary connection between a man's public virtues and his attractiveness. As a matter of fact, Pavel is an absurd person, not truly a liberal, but a parody of one. "I am protest personified. I see tyranny—I protest. I see a hypocrite—I protest. I see a triumphant swine—I protest. And I cannot be put down, no Spanish Inquisition can silence me. No. Cut out my tongue and I will protest with gestures. Wall me up in a cellar—I will shout so that you will hear me half a mile away." Is Chekhov being unfair? Some readers may think so, but others will see this parody as an illuminating, if exaggerated portrait of a liberal. (Any attitude, even Gusev's, can be parodied.) Protest *may* degenerate into mere complaint. Thus Pavel's protests about the lot of man and soon become complaints.

about his own lot, here liberal altruism becomes illiberal egoism. But Gusev never complains. He, too, worries about others, but never about mankind in the abstract, only about particular persons—Vanka, Akulka, Alexey. It would be a mistake, though, if the reader were to understand that Chekhov was making a harsh, unqualified indictment of the liberal Pavel. Chekhov takes, really, only the mildest tone. In fact, we sympathize with Pavel despite his absurdity, for he genuinely suffers.

This tone is perhaps the crown of Chekhov's art. It is much more than a matter of objectivity and neutrality, as many have pointed out. Alone, such qualities could make Chekhov lifeless. But he is fully alive, filled with tenderness, sympathy, and irony. His tone makes bright the drab and miserable. Unobtrusive, gentle, yet firmly critical, it renders the fine shadings of attitude which make for a candid yet compassionate treatment.

But is the story then merely a sketch in contrasts, with no resolution? Even the deaths of Gusev and Pavel seem to be treated as just another moment in the chronology of their last days. But let us look more closely. Directly after Pavel is dropped overboard, the sea is all "darkness and disorder," the waves "ferocious and ugly." In death, then, poor Pavel is still out of tune with nature, with existence. The manner of his dying is continuous with the manner of his living. And so with Gusev. After his death the clouds resemble a triumphal arch, a lion, and a pair of scissors—the heavens are symbolically declaring the glory (the arch) and the majesty (the lion) of Gusev's humble life, while never forgetting his mortality (the scissors of Atropos, one of the three Greek Fates). And from these clouds issue shafts of light, all a kind of death and transfiguration. Finally, even the frowning ocean responds, taking on "tender, joyous, passionate colors for which it is hard to find a name in the language of man." In this remarkable climax and resolution, Chekhov is saying that man makes his life, and that by living tenderly, joyously, and passionately (the elements of real harmony) man may transform nature, which includes man and the fact of his mortality—that is, man may transcend death.

## QUESTIONS ON CHARACTER

1 Events should be believable and probable, and the last paragraph might seem neither—after all, clouds do not usually take the shape of an arch, a lion, and a pair of scissors. With the dictum in mind that an impossible probability is preferable to an improbable possibility, can it be justified? What about the personification of the ocean?

2 Is the last paragraph a romantic glorification of Gusev? Before answering, consider its relation to the preceding paragraph with the shark.

3 How do the other characters contribute to our understanding of Gusev and Pavel?

4 Are the last words each speaks characteristic?

5 Consider, later, the meaning in the contrast or similarity of characters in "Eternal Triangle," "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," and "The Blind Man."

## *Other Considerations*

1 Chekhov's style is notable for its understatement. What is its general effect? Consider, for example, the paragraph of the shark. Is the style of the last paragraph typical? If not, is the change justifiable? Is it effective?

2 What are some of the ways in which atmosphere and tone are conveyed?

3 How does the setting contribute to the meaning? Is the setting only the ship?

4 Some readers interpret the story as a drama of the indifference of nature to man's concerns. A satisfactory interpretation must account for all the facts in a story. Does this one account for the differences between Pavel and Gusev? If you do not agree with this alternative interpretation, how do you explain the paragraph beginning, "The sea has neither sense nor pity"? A consideration of the last two paragraphs will be helpful.

5 Chekhov's use of point of view (see page 72) needs to be noted. How many different points of observation does he take? Does this frequent shifting make for what James called a "fluid pudding"? How is the sense of unity conveyed? If only one point of view were taken, would this necessarily unify a story?

6 How does the first line foreshadow the entire story? What other instances of foreshadowing can you find?

7 Ideas expressed by the author or by a character should be considered as one of the dramatic elements in the story. "Death in Venice" is filled with instances, from the barest abstract statement to the very dramatic imaginary dialogues of Socrates. Illustrate this dramatic function of ideas from Pavel's lines.



# Point of View

We have already touched on point of view in our discussions of action and character, but we might well consider now the choices open to a fiction writer, the advantages and disadvantages of each, and the importance of choosing an appropriate point of view. It must first be made clear that in itself point of view is a literary convention, a tacit agreement on the part of the reader to accept whatever liberties the author takes. Among these liberties are the imitation of reality provided by a first-person narrator and the wide-ranging knowledge and insight granted a third-person narrator.

If a writer chooses a first-person point of view, he must determine whether the "I" is to be one of the main characters, a minor character who is relatively uninvolved, or somebody repeating a narrative at second or third hand.

If the "I" is a main character, we have a deeply involved narrator, with whom we "identify" and in whose fate we are most interested. Because of his involvement, everything is dramatized, there is no lifeless matter in the story. Furthermore, this technique is excellent for revealing character through dialect, special idiom, and the like, as in "The Golden Honeymoon," "Gimpel the Fool," and "Eternal Triangle." The difficulties here are that we must be careful to consider this narrator's prejudices, limitations, purpose in telling the story, and candor in order to arrive at a "true" picture of what is taking place. In "The Golden Honeymoon," for example, we must remember that the narrator is an old man of limited intellect, jealous of his wife's former suitor, proud of his home state, and something less than frank about his own weaknesses. Then, in the light of this knowledge, we must reinterpret his versions of cultural activities in St. Petersburg and of the comparative merits of the state organizations, his accounts of the horseshoe games, and his appraisal of the Har'sells.

When the "I" is a minor character whose primary function is to observe, he is likely to have a greater objectivity, a more oblique and ironic approach, and a clearer sense of things. But, again, we are limited to what this narrator can see, hear, and perceive, and we are liable to miss the climactic confrontation of principals or to be deprived of some crucial scene. Much also depends on the degree of objectivity possible to the narrator. Is he a relative or friend of the principals? Does he observe everything at first hand, or is he forced to rely on rumors and gossip for some information? Is he affected at all by the conflict? Can we trust his reporting as being accurate and unbiased?

The function of the completely detached second- or third-hand narrator approaches that of the third-person narrator, inasmuch as he will probably be totally objective, uninvolved in the conflict, and free to interpret the action at will. Only his authority is in question. Who told *him* this story? How keen is his memory? What are his qualifications for interpreting the action as he does? Quite often, as in much of Maugham and Conrad, this device serves simply as a frame for the story to give an illusion of reality. In "How It Was Done in Odessa," as our analysis of that story shows, its use is vital to the author's purpose. Too much has been made of this question of the reality of the first-person story. It may be true that an eye-witness account gives more of an illusion of the actual event than does a third-person account, but surely no one believes that an "I" narrator automatically insures the "truth" of what is being told. People do not read fiction for literal truth.

The third-person story can be told either from the viewpoint of one character (central or peripheral) or from that of the all-knowing (omniscient) author.

When a writer chooses the first alternative, as in "Gusev," he can let us see the inner workings of only one character and can report only what this character is capable of observing. With a perceptive character (as in "Ligeia" and "Babylon Revisited"), we gain more than ordinary insight without a sacrifice of credibility. But with a simple character like Gusev, the author's job is harder, since he must somehow convey subtleties and delicate touches through the responses of a man unlikely to notice such nuances. Chekhov, evidently restless under this restriction, does not adhere strictly to Gusev's consciousness, and, in Part V, after Gusev's death, the point of view suddenly becomes omniscient.

The omniscient viewpoint is the traditional story-teller's technique ("The White Silence," "Red Leaves," "The Blind Man," "The Fairy Goose") and also gives the least illusion of reality. Here the convention is most strained. The author becomes a kind of god, capable of being in many places at the same time, knowing the past and future, able to penetrate into every character's mind and heart and thus to label each motive and thought with the infallibility granted him by his superior vantage point. "Red Leaves" illustrates the extreme flexibility of this technique. Faulkner shifts back and forth between the Indians' point of view and the single consciousness of the fleeing Negro, ending the story with a coldly detached description of the return to the Indian camp—a description perfect in its lack of comment and its complete reliance on what is physically observable.

Shadings and modifications of these points of view are, of course, possible. An author may use one character to present actions, dialogue, weather, and so forth, but he may extend this character's powers of perception and interpretation so that what we really have are the author's

superimposed comments In “Red Leaves,” we are perfectly willing to accept the Negro’s perception that the ants moved slowly up the log and that they had a salt taste, but when the Negro is next described as “watching the unbroken line move up the log and into oblivious doom with a steady and terrific undeviation,” we know we have left the Negro far behind and are now philosophizing with Faulkner Again, an author may alternate between the restricted third-person and the omniscient point of view (“Gusev” and “The Artificial Nigger”) Or he may maintain his omniscience throughout but deny himself the privilege of penetrating beneath surface appearances, confining his account to sounds, sights, and smells, with a minimum of interpretation or comment, Hemingway is noted for his use of this mixed technique, and “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” is an example of its effectiveness

Consistent point of view establishes one kind of unity in a story, that is, the reader always knows through whose eyes he is seeing the action, by whose authority he is given insights into the characters’ thoughts and emotions But a single point of view does not necessarily unify a story, which may still be loose and rambling despite this restriction Even a single consciousness may ramble True unity is one of meaning, as in any novel or play where the central character is not always present However, a short-story writer usually finds it more practical—because of the form’s narrower range—to observe a consistent point of view

One good way for a reader to test the appropriateness of a given point of view is to ask the following questions

- 1 Does this point of view seem the inevitable choice?
- 2 What would happen to the story if it were told from another point of view?
- 3 Are the limitations of this point of view in keeping with the author’s purpose (irony, humor, suspense), or do they seriously hamper him in achieving his full effect?

Apply these questions to “The Golden Honeymoon,” told by the principal character, and to “Sun and Moon,” told from the restricted third-person point of view

# The Golden Honeymoon

*Ring Lardner*

Mother says that when I start talking I never know when to stop But I tell her the only time I get a chance is when she ain't around, so I have to make the most of it I guess the fact is neither one of us would be welcome in a Quaker meeting, but as I tell Mother, what did God give us tongues for if He didn't want we should use them? Only she says He didn't give them to us to say the same thing over and over again, like I do, and repeat myself But I say

"Well, Mother," I say, "when people is like you and I and been married fifty years, do you expect everything I say will be something you ain't heard me say before? But it may be new to others, as they ain't nobody else lived with me as long as you have "

So she says

"You can bet they ain't, as they couldn't nobody else stand you that long "

"Well," I tell her, "you look pretty healthy "

"Maybe I do," she will say, "but I looked even healthier before I married you "

You can't get ahead of Mother

Yes, sir, we was married just fifty years ago the seventeenth day of last December and my daughter and son-in-law was over from Trenton to help us celebrate the Golden Wedding My son-in-law is John H Kramer, the real estate man He made \$12,000 one year and is pretty well thought of around Trenton, a good, steady, hard worker The Rotarians was after him a long time to join, but he kept telling them his home was his club But Edie finally made him join That's my daughter

Well, anyway, they come over to help us celebrate the Golden Wedding and it was pretty crimpy weather and the furnace don't seem to heat up no more like it used to and Mother made the remark that she hoped this winter wouldn't be as cold as the last, referring to the winter previous So Edie said if she was us, and nothing to keep us home, she certainly wouldn't spend no more winters up here and why didn't we just shut off the water and close up the house and go down to Tampa, Florida? You know we was there four winters ago and staid five weeks, but it cost us

over three hundred and fifty dollars for hotel bill alone So Mother said we wasn't going no place to be robbed So my son-in-law spoke up and said that Tampa wasn't the only place in the South, and besides we didn't have to stop at no high price hotel but could rent us a couple rooms and board out somewheres, and he had heard that St Petersburg, Florida, was *the* spot and if we said the word he would write down there and make inquiries

Well, to make a long story short, we decided to do it and Edie said it would be our Golden Honeymoon and for a present my son-in-law paid the difference between a section and a compartment so as we could have a compartment and have more privacy In a compartment you have an upper and lower berth just like the regular sleeper, but it is a shut in room by itself and got a wash bowl The car we went in was all compartments and no regular berths at all It was all compartments

We went to Trenton the night before and staid at my daughter and son-in-law and we left Trenton the next afternoon at 3 23 p m

This was the twelfth day of January Mother set facing the front of the train, as it makes her giddy to ride backwards I set facing her, which does not affect me We reached North Philadelphia at 4 03 p m and we reached West Philadelphia at 4 14, but did not go into Broad Street We reached Baltimore at 6 30 and Washington, D C , at 7 25 Our train laid over in Washington two hours till another train come along to pick us up and I got out and strolled up the platform and into the Union Station When I come back, our car had been switched on to another track, but I remembered the name of it, the La Belle, as I had once visited my aunt out in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, where there was a lake of that name, so I had no difficulty in getting located But Mother had nearly fretted herself sick for fear I would be left

"Well," I said, "I would of followed you on the next train "

"You could of," said Mother, and she pointed out that she had the money

"Well," I said, "we are in Washington and I could of borrowed from the United States Treasury I would of pretended I was an Englishman "

Mother caught the point and laughed heartily

Our train pulled out of Washington at 9 40 p m and Mother and I turned in early, I taking the upper During the night we passed through the green fields of old Virginia, though it was too dark to tell if they was green or what color When we got up in the morning, we was at Fayetteville, North Carolina We had breakfast in the dining car and after breakfast I got in conversation with the man in the next compartment to ours He was from Lebanon, New Hampshire, and a man about eighty years of age His wife was with him, and two unmarried daughters and I made the remark that I should think the four of them would be crowded in one compartment, but he said they had made the trip every winter for fifteen

years and knowed how to keep out of each other's way He said they was bound for Tarpon Springs

We reached Charleston, South Carolina, at 12 50 p m and arrived at Savannah, Georgia, at 4 20 We reached Jacksonville, Florida, at 8 45 p m and had an hour and a quarter to lay over there, but Mother made a fuss about me getting off the train, so we had the darky make up our berths and retired before we left Jacksonville I didn't sleep good as the train done a lot of hemming and hawing, and Mother never sleeps good on a train as she says she is always worrying that I will fall out She says she would rather have the upper herself, as then she would not have to worry about me, but I tell her I can't take the risk of having it get out that I allowed my wife to sleep in an upper berth It would make talk

We was up in the morning in time to see our friends from New Hampshire get off at Tarpon Springs, which we reached at 6 53 a m

Several of our fellow passengers got off at Clearwater and some at Belleair, where the train backs right up to the door of the mammoth hotel Belleair is the winter headquarters for the golf dudes and everybody that got off there had their bag of sticks, as many as ten and twelve in a bag Women and all When I was a young man we called it shinny and only needed one club to play with and about one game of it would of been a-plenty for some of these dudes, the way we played it

The train pulled into St Petersburg at 8 20 and when we got off the train you would think they was a riot, what with all the darkies barking for the different hotels

I said to Mother, I said

"It is a good thing we have got a place picked out to go to and don't have to choose a hotel, as it would be hard to choose amongst them if everyone of them is the best"

She laughed

We found a jitney and I give him the address of the room my son-in-law had got for us and soon we was there and introduced ourselves to the lady that owns the house, a young widow about forty-eight years of age She showed us our room, which was light and airy with a comfortable bed and bureau and washstand It was twelve dollars a week, but the location was good, only three blocks from Williams Park

St Pete is what folks calls the town, though they also call it the Sunshine City, as they claim they's no other place in the country where they's fewer days when Old Sol don't smile down on Mother Earth, and one of the newspapers gives away all their copies free every day when the sun don't shine They claim to of only give them away some sixty-odd times in the last eleven years Another nickname they have got for the town is "the Poor Man's Palm Beach," but I guess they's men that comes there that could borrow as much from the bank as some of the Willie boys over to the other Palm Beach

During our stay we paid a visit to the Lewis Tent City, which is the headquarters for the Tin-Can Tourists. But maybe you ain't heard about them. Well, they are an organization that takes their vacation trips by auto and carries everything with them. That is, they bring along their tents to sleep in and cook in and they don't patronize no hotels or cafeterias, but they have got to be bona fide auto campers or they can't belong to the organization.

They tell me they's over 200,000 members to it and they call themselves the Tin-Canners on account of most of their food being put up in tin cans. One couple we seen in the Tent City was a couple from Brady, Texas, named Mr. and Mrs. Pence, which the old man is over eighty years of age and they had come in their auto all the way from home, a distance of 1,641 miles. They took five weeks for the trip, Mr. Pence driving the entire distance.

The Tin-Canners hails from every State in the Union and in the summer time they visit places like New England and the Great Lakes region, but in the winter the most of them comes to Florida and scatters all over the State. While we was down there, they was a national convention of them at Gainesville, Florida, and they elected a Fredonia, New York, man as their president. His title is Royal Tin-Can Opener of the World. They have got a song wrote up which everybody has got to learn it before they are a member.

'The tin can forever! Hurrah, boys! Hurrah!

Up with the tin can! Down with the foe!

We will rally round the campfire, we'll rally once again,

Shouting, We auto camp forever!

That is something like it. And the members has also got to have a tin can fastened on to the front of their machine.

I asked Mother how she would like to travel around that way and she said

"Fine, but not with an old rattle brain like you driving."

"Well," I said, "I am eight years younger than this Mr. Pence who drove here from Texas."

"Yes," she said, "but he is old enough to not be skittish."

You can't get ahead of Mother.

Well, one of the first things we done in St. Petersburg was to go to the Chamber of Commerce and register our names and where we was from as they's great rivalry amongst the different States in regards to the number of their citizens visiting in town and of course our little State don't stand much of a show, but still every little bit helps, as the fella says. All and all, the man told us, they was eleven thousand names registered, Ohio leading with some fifteen hundred-odd and New York State next with twelve hundred. Then come Michigan, Pennsylvania and so on down, with one man each from Cuba and Nevada.

The first night we was there, they was a meeting of the New York-New Jersey Society at the Congregational Church and a man from Ogdensburg, New York State, made the talk His subject was Rainbow Chasing He is a Rotarian and a very convicting speaker, though I forget his name

Our first business, of course, was to find a place to eat and after trying several places we run on to a cafeteria on Central Avenue that suited us up and down We eat pretty near all our meals there and it averaged about two dollars per day for the two of us, but the food was well cooked and everything nice and clean A man don't mind paying the price if things is clean and well cooked

On the third day of February, which is Mother's birthday, we spread ourselves and eat supper at the Poinsettia Hotel and they charged us seventy-five cents for a sirloin steak that wasn't hardly big enough for one

I said to Mother "Well," I said, "I guess it's a good thing every day ain't your birthday or we would be in the poorhouse "

"No," says Mother, "because if every day was my birthday, I would be old enough by this time to of been in my grave long ago "

You can't get ahead of Mother

In the hotel they had a card room where they was several men and ladies playing five hundred and this new fangled whist bridge We also seen a place where they was dancing, so I asked Mother would she like to trip the light fantastic toe and she said no, she was too old to squirm like you have got to do now days We watched some of the young folks at it awhile till Mother got disgusted and said we would have to see a good movie to take the taste out of our mouth Mother is a great movie heroyne and we go twice a week here at home

But I want to tell you about the Park The second day we was there we visited the Park, which is a good deal like the one in Tampa, only bigger, and they's more fun goes on here every day than you could shake a stick at In the middle they's a big bandstand and chairs for the folks to set and listen to the concerts, which they give you music for all tastes, from "Dixie" up to classical pieces like "Hearts and Flowers "

Then all around they's places marked off for different sports and games—chess and checkers and dominoes for folks that enjoys those kind of games, and roque and horse-shoes for the nimbler ones I used to pitch a pretty fair shoe myself, but ain't done much of it in the last twenty years

Well, anyway, we bought a membership ticket in the club which costs one dollar for the season, and they tell me that up to a couple years ago it was fifty cents, but they had to raise it to keep out the riffraff

Well, Mother and I put in a great day watching the pitchers and she wanted I should get in the game, but I told her I was all out of practice and would make a fool of myself, though I seen several men pitching who I guess I could take their measure without no practice However, they was some good pitchers, too, and one boy from Akron, Ohio, who could



certainly throw a pretty shoe They told me it looked like he would win the championship of the United States in the February tournament We come away a few days before they held that and I never did hear if he win I forget his name, but he was a clean cut young fella and he has got a brother in Cleveland that's a Rotarian

Well, we just stood around and watched the different games for two or three days and finally I set down in a checker game with a man named Weaver from Danville, Illinois He was a pretty fair checker player, but he wasn't no match for me, and I hope that don't sound like bragging But I always could hold my own on a checkerboard and the folks around here will tell you the same thing I played with this Weaver pretty near all morning for two or three mornings and he beat me one game and the only other time it looked like he had a chance, the noon whistle blowed and we had to quit and go to dinner

While I was playing checkers, Mother would set and listen to the band as she loves music, classical or no matter what kind, but anyway she was setting there one day and between selections the woman next to her opened up a conversation She was a woman about Mother's own age, seventy or seventy-one, and finally she asked Mother's name and Mother told her her name and where she was from and Mother asked her the same question, and who do you think the woman was?

Well, sir, it was the wife of Frank M Hartsell, the man who was engaged to Mother till I stepped in and cut him out, fifty-two years ago!

Yes, sir!

You can imagine Mother's surprise! And Mrs Hartsell was surprised, too, when Mother told her she had once been friends with her husband, though Mother didn't say how close friends they had been, or that Mother and I was the cause of Hartsell going out West But that's what we was Hartsell left his town a month after the engagement was broke off and ain't never been back since He had went out to Michigan and become a veterinary, and that is where he had settled down, in Hillsdale, Michigan, and finally married his wife

Well, Mother screwed up her courage to ask if Frank was still living and Mrs Hartsell took her over to where they was pitching horse-shoes and there was old Frank, waiting his turn And he knowed Mother as soon as he seen her, though it was over fifty years He said he knowed her by her eyes

"Why, it's Lucy Frost!" he says, and he throwed down his shoes and quit the game

Then they come over and hunted me up and I will confess I wouldn't of knowed him Him and I is the same age to the month, but he seems to show it more, some way He is balder for one thing And his beard is all white, where mine has still got a streak of brown in it The very first thing I said to him, I said

"Well, Frank, that beard of yours makes me feel like I was back north. It looks like a regular blizzard."

"Well," he said, "I guess yourn would be just as white if you had it dry cleaned."

But Mother wouldn't stand that.

"Is that so?" she said to Frank. "Well, Charley ain't had no tobacco in his mouth for over ten years!"

And I ain't!

Well, I excused myself from the checker game and it was pretty close to noon, so we decided to all have dinner together and they was nothing for it only we must try their cafeteria on Thurd Avenue. It was a little more expensive than ours and not near as good, I thought. I and Mother had about the same dinner we had been having every day and our bill was \$1 10. Frank's check was \$1 20 for he and his wife. The same meal wouldn't of cost them more than a dollar at our place.

After dinner we made them come up to our house and we all set in the parlor, which the young woman had give us the use of to entertain company. We begun talking over old times and Mother said she was a-scared Mrs. Hartsell would find it tiresome listening to we three talk over old times, but as it turned out they wasn't much chance for nobody else to talk with Mrs. Hartsell in the company. I have heard lots of women that could go it, but Hartsell's wife takes the cake of all the women I ever seen. She told us the family history of everybody in the State of Michigan and bragged for a half hour about her son, who she said is in the drug business in Grand Rapids, and a Rotarian.

When I and Hartsell could get a word in edgeways we joked one another back and forth and I chafed him about being a horse doctor.

"Well, Frank," I said, "you look pretty prosperous, so I suppose they's been plenty of glanders around Hillsdale."

"Well," he said, "I've managed to make more than a fair living. But I've worked pretty hard."

"Yes," I said, "and I suppose you get called out all hours of the night to attend births and so on."

Mother made me shut up.

Well, I thought they wouldn't never go home and I and Mother was in misery trying to keep awake, as the both of us generally always takes a nap after dinner. Finally they went, after we had made an engagement to meet them in the Park the next morning, and Mrs. Hartsell also invited us to come to their place the next night and play five hundred. But she had forgot that they was a meeting of the Michigan Society that evening, so it was not till two evenings later that we had our first card game.

Hartsell and his wife lived in a house on Third Avenue North and had a private setting room besides their bedroom. Mrs. Hartsell couldn't quit talking about their private setting room like it was something wonderful.

We played cards with them, with Mother and Hartsell partners against his wife and I Mrs Hartsell is a miserable card player and we certainly got the worst of it

After the game she brought out a dish of oranges and we had to pretend it was just what we wanted, though oranges down there is like a young man's whiskers, you enjoy them at first, but they get to be a pesky nuisance

We played cards again the next night at our place with the same partners and I and Mrs Hartsell was beat again Mother and Hartsell was full of compliments for each other on what a good team they made, but the both of them knowed well enough where the secret of their success laid I guess all and all we must of played ten different evenings and they was only one night when Mrs Hartsell and I come out ahead And that one night wasn't no fault of hern

When we had been down there about two weeks, we spent one evening as their guest in the Congregational Church, at a social give by the Michigan Society A talk was made by a man named Bitting of Detroit, Michigan, on How I was Cured of Story Telling He is a big man in the Rotarians and give a witty talk

A woman named Mrs Oxford rendered some selections which Mrs Hartsell said was grand opera music, but whatever they was my daughter Edie could of give her cards and spades and not made such a hullabaloo about it neither

Then they was a ventriloquist from Grand Rapids and a young woman about forty-five years of age that mimicked different kinds of birds I whispered to Mother that they all sounded like a chicken, but she nudged me to shut up

After the show we stopped in a drugstore and I set up the refreshments and it was pretty close to ten o'clock before we finally turned in Mother and I would of preferred tending the movies, but Mother said we mustn't offend Mrs Hartsell, though I asked her had we came to Florida to enjoy ourselves or to just not offend an old chatter-box from Michigan

I felt sorry for Hartsell one morning The women folks both had an engagement down to the chiropodist's and I run across Hartsell in the Park and he foolishly offered to play me checkers

It was him that suggested it not me, and I guess he repented himself before we had played one game But he was too stubborn to give up and set there while I beat him game after game and the worst part of it was that a crowd of folks had got in the habit of watching me play and there they all was, looking on, and finally they seen what a fool Frank was making of himself, and they began to chafe him and pass remarks Like one of them said

"Who ever told you you was a checker player!"

And

"You might maybe be good for tiddle-de-winks, but not checkers!"

I almost felt like letting him beat me a couple games But the crowd would of knowed it was a put up job

Well, the women folks joined us in the Park and I wasn't going to mention our little game, but Hartsell told about it himself and admitted he wasn't no match for me

"Well," said Mrs Hartsell, 'checkers ain't much of a game anyway, is it?' She said "It's more of a children's game, ain't it? At least, I know my boy's children used to play it a good deal "

"Yes, ma'am," I said "It's a children's game the way your husband plays it, too "

Mother wanted to smooth things over, so she said

"Maybe they's other games where Frank can beat you "

"Yes," said Mrs Hartsell, "and I bet he could beat you pitching horse-shoes "

' Well," I said, "I would give him a chance to try, only I ain't pitched a shoe in over sixteen years "

"Well," said Hartsell, "I ain't played checkers in twenty years "

"You ain't never played it," I said

"Anyway," says Frank, "Lucy and I is your master at five hundred "

Well, I could of told him why that was, but had decency enough to hold my tongue

It had got so now that he wanted to play cards every night and when I or Mother wanted to go to a movie, any one of us would have to pretend we had a headache and then trust to goodness that they wouldn't see us sneak into the theater I don't mind playing cards when my partner keeps their mind on the game, but you take a woman like Hartsell's wife and how can they play cards when they have got to stop every couple seconds and brag about their son in Grand Rapids?

Well, the New York-New Jersey Society announced that they was going to give a social evening too and I said to Mother, I said

"Well, that is one evening when we will have an excuse not to play five hundred "

"Yes," she said, 'but we will have to ask Frank and his wife to go to the social with us as they asked us to go to the Michigan social "

"Well," I said, "I had rather stay home than drag that Chatter-box everywheres we go "

So Mother said

"You are getting too cranky Maybe she does talk a little too much but she is good hearted And Frank is always good company "

So I said

"I suppose if he is such good company you wished you had of married him "

Mother laughed and said I sounded like I was jealous Jealous of a cow doctor!



sell didn't join in and she was madder than a hornet and wouldn't play no more, so the game broke up

Mrs Hartsell went home without speaking to nobody, but Hartsell stayed around and finally he said to me, he said

"Well, I played you checkers the other day and you beat me bad and now what do you say if you and me play a game of horse-shoes?"

I told him I hadn't pitched a shoe in sixteen years, but Mother said

"Go ahead and play You used to be good at it and maybe it will come back to you "

Well, to make a long story short, I give in I oughtn't to of never tried it, as I hadn't pitched a shoe in sixteen years, and I only done it to humor Hartsell

Before we started, Mother patted me on the back and told me to do my best, so we started in and I seen right off that I was in for it, as I hadn't pitched a shoe in sixteen years and didn't have my distance And besides, the plating had wore off the shoes so that they was points right where they stuck into my thumb and I hadn't throwed more than two or three times when my thumb was raw and it pretty near killed me to hang on to the shoe, let alone pitch it

Well, Hartsell throws the awkwardest shoe I ever seen pitched and to see him pitch you wouldn't think he would ever come nowheres near, but he is also the luckiest pitcher I ever seen and he made some pitches where the shoe lit five and six feet short and then schoonered up and was a ringer They's no use trying to beat that kind of luck

They was a pretty fair size crowd watching us and four or five other ladies besides Mother, and it seems like, when Hartsell pitches, he has got to chew and it kept the ladies on the anxious seat as he don't seem to care which way he is facing when he leaves go

You would think a man as old as him would of learnt more manners

Well, to make a long story short, I was just beginning to get my distance when I had to give up on account of my thumb, which I showed to Hartsell and he seen I couldn't go on, as it was raw and bleeding Even if I could of stood it to go on myself, Mother wouldn't of allowed it after she seen my thumb So anyway I quit and Hartsell said the score was nineteen to six, but I don't know what it was Or don't care, neither

Well, Mother and I went home and I said I hoped we was through with the Hartsells as I was sick and tired of them, but it seemed like she had promised we would go over to their house that evening for another game of their everlasting cards

Well, my thumb was giving me considerable pain and I felt kind of out of sorts and I guess maybe I forgot myself, but anyway, when we was about through playing Hartsell made the remark that he wouldn't never lose a game of cards if he could always have Mother for a partner

So I said

"Well, you had a chance fifty years ago to always have her for a partner, but you wasn't man enough to keep her "

I was sorry the minute I had said it and Hartsell didn't know what to say and for once his wife couldn't say nothing Mother tried to smooth things over by making the remark that I must of had something stronger than tea or I wouldn't talk so silly But Mrs Hartsell had froze up like an iceberg and hardly said good night to us and I bet her and Frank put in a pleasant hour after we was gone

As we was leaving, Mother said to him "Never mind Charley's nonsense, Frank He is just mad because you beat him all hollow pitching horse-shoes and playing cards "

She said that to make up for my slip, but at the same time she certainly riled me I tried to keep ahold of myself, but as soon as we was out of the house she had to open up the subject and begun to scold me for the break I had made

Well, I wasn't in no mood to be scolded So I said

"I guess he is such a wonderful pitcher and card player that you wished you had married him "

'Well,' she said, "at least he ain't a baby to give up pitching because his thumb has got a few scratches "

'And how about you,' I said, "making a fool of yourself on the roque court and then pretending your back is lame and you can't play no more!"

'Yes,' she said, "but when you hurt your thumb I didn't laugh at you and why did you laugh at me when I sprained my back?"

"Who could help from laughing!" I said

"Well," she said, "Frank Hartsell didn't laugh "

"Well," I said, "why didn't you marry him?"

"Well," said Mother, "I almost wished I had!"

"And I wished so, too!" I said

"I'll remember that!" said Mother, and that's the last word she said to me for two days

We seen the Hartsells the next day in the Park and I was willing to apologize, but they just nodded to us And a couple days later we heard they had left for Orlando, where they have got relatives

I wished they had went there in the first place

Mother and I made it up setting on a bench

"Listen, Charley," she said "This is our Golden Honeymoon and we don't want the whole thing spoilt with a silly old quarrel "

"Well," I said, "did you mean that about wishing you had married Hartsell?"

"Of course not," she said, "that is, if you didn't mean that you wished I had, too "

So I said

"I was just tired and all wrought up I thank God you chose me instead of him as they's no other woman in the world who I could of lived with all these years "

"How about Mrs Hartsell?" says Mother

"Good gracious!" I said "Imagine being married to a woman that plays five hundred like she does and drops her teeth on the roque court!"

"Well," said Mother, "it wouldn't be no worse than being married to a man that expectorates towards ladies and is such a fool in a checker game "

So I put my arm around her shoulder and she stroked my hand and I guess we got kind of spoony

They was two days left of our stay in St Petersburg and the next to the last day Mother introduced me to a Mrs Kendall from Kingston, Rhode Island, who she had met at the chiropodist's

Mrs Kendall made us acquainted with her husband, who is in the grocery business They have got two sons and five grandchildren and one great-grandchild One of their sons lives in Providence and is way up in the Elks as well as a Rotarian

We found them very congenial people and we played cards with them the last two nights we was there They was both experts and I only wished we had met them sooner instead of running into the Hartsells But the Kendalls will be there again next winter and we will see more of them, that is, if we decide to make the trip again

We left the Sunshine City on the eleventh day of February, at 11 a m This gave us a day trip through Florida and we seen all the country we had passed through at night on the way down

We reached Jacksonville at 7 p m and pulled out of there at 8 10 p m We reached Fayetteville, North Carolina, at nine o'clock the following morning, and reached Washington, D C , at 6 30 p m , laying over there half an hour

We reached Trenton at 11 01 p m and had wired ahead to my daughter and son-in-law and they met us at the train and we went to their house and they put us up for the night John would of made us stay up all night, telling about our trip, but Edie said we must be tired and made us go to bed That's my daughter

The next day we took our train for home and arrived safe and sound, having been gone just one month and a day

Here comes Mother, so I guess I better shut up

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[After the reader has worked out his own ideas he should consider the critical comments on this story in the Appendix ]



## COMMENT

The key problem for the reader intent on a close analysis of this story is one of attitude. A writer using an omniscient point of view can easily and clearly reveal his attitude, as Jack London does in "The White Silence", but the use of a first-person narrator places the writer at two removes from the material and thus demands of us a double job of interpretation—"What is the narrator's attitude?" and "What is the writer's attitude towards the narrator?" If the narrator is presented as sufficiently intelligent, candid, perceptive, and unprejudiced, then we might assume that he speaks for the author and that we need not go beyond his reactions. If, however, he is slow-witted, evasive, unaware, or involved so deeply in his own version of events that he cannot be objective, then we must be skeptical of his authority. Indeed, quite often the importance of such a story lies in what the telling reveals about the narrator rather than in the plot, the *way* of telling the story overshadows *what* is told.

In "The Golden Honeymoon," as in many stories told from the first-person point of view, a certain kind of irony develops. The reader's knowledge is limited to the insights of the narrator—here, a rather insensitive old man who has a need to preserve his pride and to demonstrate his mastery of all situations. But the reader sees through the narrator's needs and understands more than the old man intends to reveal. (Incidentally, the writer is flattering the reader by assuming that *he* cannot be fooled, that *his* superior intelligence will penetrate through this mask of words to "what really happened.") This technique may have been responsible for the popularity of Lardner's famous "You Know Me Al" with the very baseball players and fans it satirized. Jack Keefe, the hero-narrator, is so simple-minded that any reader beyond the seventh-grade level could patronize him.)

Next we must determine Lardner's attitude toward this narrator. Is the old man foolish? despicable? pitiable? Or is he simply a normal, harmless, garrulous figure approaching senility? Is he a purely comic character, or is there something pathetic about him? How does Lardner wish us to view him? (Before coming to any final conclusions, the reader should consider the various interpretations in the Appendix.)

The language used by the narrator often indicates much of the author's intention. The extraordinary accuracy of Lardner's ear for the American vernacular has been cited as the one quality of his work that is unassailably good—his greatest gift. And in his reproduction of the narrator's grammatical and syntactical mayhem, he reveals the shallow unawareness and imprecision of the old man. Lardner caught not only the illiterate pronunciations, the subtle slips of grammar, the malapropisms, and the deadly repetitions of phrase and cliché, but, as Gilbert Seldes pointed out, he understood the "habits of mind which make our speech, and his ear actually 'heard' the authentic rhythm of common speech, so that if the words were corrected the language would still be the language of the

illiterate because of the cadence in which the words fell”<sup>10</sup> Lardner himself seems to have placed this feature of his style above even the satiric elements in his writing. Where do they get that stuff about me being a satirist?” he once asked an interviewer. “I ain’t no satirist. I just listen.”

And we, as readers, listen too. In addition to the revealing language, we also notice *what* the man talks about. His favorite pastime seems to be delivering long monologues and checking and memorizing train schedules. His recounting of the train trip from Trenton to St. Petersburg, his appreciative descriptions of the entertainment provided by the State societies, his enjoyment of his own feeble repartee—all these reinforce the close relationship between style and meaning. By letting this old man talk and talk, Lardner allows us to see the terrible emptiness of his life, of these four lives, isolated from one another, unable to communicate, and, the reader fears, having nothing to say even if they could.

The age of the narrator is also relevant. “The Golden Honeymoon” deals with old age, one of the sacred cows of American literature. Lardner here demonstrates that age does not automatically produce wisdom, patience, kindness, understanding, forbearance, or mellowness. Like every other couple created by this author, this pair have learned nothing from their long journey through life. They have managed to remain together probably because it no longer makes any difference, any other pairing would have had the same results, as witness the Hartsells.

If we apply the questions on page 74 to “The Golden Honeymoon,” we see that Lardner did choose the inevitable point of view, since this is a story not of action (in which case the omniscient author might have been justified) nor of the sadness of old age (which a sensitive third-person observer might best have captured), but of comically unaware self-revelation. The author does not have to analyze the old man’s character for us, to tell us that he is boring and literal-minded, instead, he lets him recite train schedules and remark that “Mother hoped this winter wouldn’t be as cold as the last, referring to the winter previous.” *Everything* is immediate, and the language of the narrator (most of which would be lost if the point of view were changed), in all its flatness and repetition, conveys the unimaginativeness and drabness—and *humor*—that form the substance of the story.

## QUESTIONS ON POINT OF VIEW

1 How does Lardner allow the narrator to reveal the weaknesses in his own character and still remain credible? What are these weaknesses? Is there any strength evident? Is it logical that he should repeat those dialogues in which “Mother” gets the better of him?

2 Who would you say is the superior member of this couple? In what ways? (Remember we see “Mother” only through the eyes of her husband.) How would the story be changed if “Mother” were the narrator?

3 Does Lardner ever intrude his own observations, thereby violating

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<sup>10</sup> From Gilbert Seldes, *American Humor in America as Americans See It*, ed. Fred J. Ringel (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1932).

the purity of the first person point of view? Are any of the narrator's observations out of keeping with his personality?

### *Other Considerations*

1 Read the criticism of this story by Vernon Loggins in the Appendix. Do you agree with his statement of the theme? Would the marriage of "Mother" and Frank Hartsell have been any more "sensible" or happier than the choice she did make? How do you know?

2 Clifton Fadiman claims that most readers missed the subsurface hatred and bitterness of this story and viewed it as "touching and sentimental." How could such a misreading be possible? Or do you think it *is* a misreading? (Study carefully Donald Elder's rebuttal of Fadiman.)

3 Most stories about elderly persons have a difficult time avoiding sentimentality, that is, the writers rely on the reader's making stock responses of sympathy, solicitude, compassion and so forth. In his attempt to avoid this kind of sentimentality, does Lardner "load" his portrait of old age unfairly on the other side of the scales? How much does Lardner exaggerate? In "The Town Poor," Sarah Orne Jewett deals with old women in what is potentially a very sentimental situation. Can she be accused of sentimentality? If not, how does she manage to avoid it?

4 In what way is the title ironic?

5 What is Lardner's purpose in including the description of the old New Hampshire couple with two unmarried daughters, all of whom have, for the past fifteen years, made the trip to Tarpon Springs in a single compartment?

# Sun and Moon

*Katherine Mansfield*

In the afternoon the chairs came, a whole big cart full of little gold ones with their legs in the air And then the flowers came When you stared down from the balcony at the people carrying them the flower pots looked like funny awfully nice hats nodding up the path

Moon thought they were hats She said "Look There's a man wearing a palm on his head" But she never knew the difference between real things and not real ones

There was nobody to look after Sun and Moon Nurse was helping Annie alter Mother's dress which was much-too-long-and-tight-under-the-arms and Mother was running all over the house and telephoning Father to be sure not to forget things She only had time to say "Out of my way, children!"

They kept out of her way—at any rate Sun did He did so hate being sent stumping back to the nursery It didn't matter about Moon If she got tangled in people's legs they only threw her up and shook her till she squeaked But Sun was too heavy for that He was so heavy that the fat man who came to dinner on Sundays used to say "Now, young man, let's try to lift you" And then he'd put his thumbs under Sun's arms and groan and try and give it up at last saying "He's a perfect little ton of bricks!"

Nearly all the furniture was taken out of the dining-room The big piano was put in a corner and then there came a row of flower pots and then there came the goldy chairs That was for the concert When Sun looked in a white faced man sat at the piano—not playing, but banging at it and then looking inside He had a bag of tools on the piano and he had stuck his hat on a statue against the wall Sometimes he just started to play and then he jumped up again and looked inside Sun hoped he wasn't the concert

But of course the place to be in was the kitchen There was a man helping in a cap like a blancmange, and their real cook, Minnie, was all red in the face and laughing Not cross at all She gave them each an almond finger and lifted them up on to the flour bin so that they could

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watch the wonderful things she and the man were making for supper Cook brought in the things and he put them on dishes and trimmed them Whole fishes, with their heads and eyes and tails still on, he sprinkled with red and green and yellow bits, he made squiggles all over the jellies, he stuck a collar on a ham and put a very thin sort of a fork in it, he dotted almonds and tiny round biscuits on the creams And more and more things kept coming

"Ah, but you haven't seen the ice pudding," said Cook "Come along " Why was she being so nice, thought Sun as she gave them each a hand And they looked into the refrigerator

Oh! Oh! Oh! It was a little house It was a little pink house with white snow on the roof and green windows and a brown door and stuck in the door there was a nut for a handle

When Sun saw the nut he felt quite tired and had to lean against Cook 'Let me touch it Just let me put my finger on the roof," said Moon, dancing She always wanted to touch all the food Sun didn't

"Now, my girl, look sharp with the table," said Cook as the housemaid came in

"It's a picture, Min," said Nellie "Come along and have a look " So they all went into the dining-room Sun and Moon were almost frightened They wouldn't go up to the table at first, they just stood at the door and made eyes at it

It wasn't real night yet but the blinds were down in the dining-room and the lights turned on—and all the lights were red roses Red ribbons and bunches of roses tied up the table at the corners In the middle was a lake with rose petals floating on it

"That's where the ice pudding is to be," said Cook

Two silver lions with wings had fruit on their backs, and the salt cellars were tiny birds drinking out of basins

And all the winking glasses and shining plates and sparkling knives and forks—and all the food And the little red table napkins made into roses

"Are people going to eat the food?" asked Sun

'I should just think they were," laughed Cook, laughing with Nellie Moon laughed, too, she always did the same as other people But Sun didn't want to laugh Round and round he walked with his hands behind his back Perhaps he never would have stopped if Nurse hadn't called suddenly "Now then, children It's high time you were washed and dressed " And they were marched off to the nursery

While they were being unbuttoned Mother looked in with a white thing over her shoulders, she was rubbing stuff on her face

"I'll ring for them when I want them, Nurse, and then they can just come down and be seen and go back again," said she

Sun was undressed, first nearly to his skin, and dressed again in a white

shirt with red and white daisies speckled on it, breeches with strings at the sides and braces that came over, white socks and red shoes

"Now you're in your Russian costume," said Nurse, flattening down his fringe

"Am I?" said Sun

"Yes Sit quiet in that chair and watch your little sister "

Moon took ages When she had her socks put on she pretended to fall back on the bed and waved her legs at Nurse as she always did, and every time Nurse tried to make her curls with a finger and a wet brush she turned round and asked Nurse to show her the photo on her brooch or something like that But at last she was finished too Her dress stuck out, with fur on it, all white, there was even fluffy stuff on the legs of her drawers Her shoes were white with big blobs on them

"There you are, my lamb," said Nurse "And you look like a sweet little cherub of a picture of a powder-puff " Nurse rushed to the door Ma'am, one moment "

Mother came in again with half her hair down

"Oh," she cried "What a picture!"

"Isn't she," said Nurse

And Moon held out her skirts by the tips and dragged one of her feet Sun didn't mind people not noticing him—much

After that they played clean tidy games up at the table while Nurse stood at the door, and when the carriages began to come and the sound of laughter and voices and soft rustlings came from down below she whispered "Now then, children, stay where you are " Moon kept jerking the table cloth so that it all hung down her side and Sun hadn't any—and then she pretended she didn't do it on purpose

At last the bell rang Nurse pounced at them with the hair brush, flattened his fringe, made her bow stand on end and joined their hands together

"Down you go!" she whispered

And down they went Sun did feel silly holding Moon's hand like that but Moon seemed to like it She swung her arm and the bell on her coral bracelet jingled

At the drawing-room door stood Mother fanning herself with a black fan The drawing-room was full of sweet smelling, silky, rustling ladies and men in black with funny tails on their coats—like beetles Father was among them, talking very loud, and rattling something in his pocket

"What a picture!" cried the ladies "Oh, the ducks! Oh, the lambs! Oh, the sweets! Oh, the pets!"

All the people who couldn't get at Moon kissed Sun, and a skinny old lady with teeth that clicked said "Such a serious little poppet," and rapped him on the head with something hard

Sun looked to see if the same concert was there, but he was gone

Instead, a fat man with a pink head leaned over the piano talking to a girl who held a violin at her ear

There was only one man that Sun really liked. He was a little grey man with long grey whiskers, who walked about by himself. He came up to Sun and rolled his eyes in a very nice way and said "Hullo, my lad." Then he went away. But soon he came back again and said "Fond of dogs?" Sun said "Yes." But then he went away again and though Sun looked for him everywhere he couldn't find him. He thought perhaps he'd gone outside to fetch in a puppy.

"Good night, my precious babies," said Mother, folding them up in her bare arms. "Fly up to your little nest."

Then Moon went and made a silly of herself again. She put up her arms in front of everybody and said "My Daddy must carry me."

But they seemed to like it, and Daddy swooped down and picked her up as he always did.

Nurse was in such a hurry to get them to bed that she even interrupted Sun over his prayers and said "Get on with them, child, *do*." And the moment after they were in bed and in the dark except for the nightlight in its little saucer.

"Are you asleep?" asked Moon.

"No," said Sun. "Are you?"

"No," said Moon.

A long while after Sun woke up again. There was a loud, loud noise of clapping from downstairs, like when it rains. He heard Moon turn over.

"Moon, are you awake?"

"Yes, are you?"

"Yes. Well, let's go and look over the stairs."

They had just got settled on the top step when the drawing-room door opened and they heard the party cross over the hall into the dining-room. Then that door was shut, there was a noise of "pops" and laughing. Then that stopped and Sun saw them all walking round and round the lovely table with their hands behind their backs like he had done. Round and round they walked, looking and staring. The man with the grey whiskers liked the little house best. When he saw the nut for a handle he rolled his eyes like he did before and said to Sun "Seen the nut?"

"Don't nod your head like that, Moon."

"I'm not nodding. It's you."

"It is not. I never nod my head."

"O-oh, you do. You're nodding it now."

"I'm not. I'm only showing you how not to do it."

When they woke up again they could hear Father's voice very loud, and Mother, laughing away. Father came out of the dining-room, bounded up the stairs, and nearly fell over them.

"Hullo!" he said "By jove, Kitty, come and look at this "

Mother came out "Oh, you naughty children," said she from the hall

"Let's have 'em down and give 'em a bone," said Father Sun had never seen him so jolly

"No, certainly not," said Mother

"Oh, my Daddy, do! Do have us down," said Moon

"I'm hanged if I won't," cried Father 'I won't be bullied Kitty—way there " And he caught them up, one under each arm

Sun thought Mother would have been dreadfully cross But she wasn't She kept on laughing at Father

"Oh, you dreadful boy!" said she But she didn't mean Sun

"Come on, kiddies Come and have some pickings," said this jolly Father But Moon stopped a minute

"Mother—your dress is right off one side "

"Is it?" said Mother And Father said "Yes" and pretended to bite her white shoulder, but she pushed him away

And so they went back to the beautiful dining-room

But—oh! oh! what had happened The ribbons and the roses were all pulled untied The little red table napkins lay on the floor, all the shining plates were dirty and all the winking glasses The lovely food that the man had trimmed was all thrown about, and there were bones and bits and fruit peels and shells everywhere There was even a bottle lying down with stuff coming out of it on to the cloth and nobody stood it up again

And the little pink house with the snow roof and the green windows was broken—broken—half melted away in the centre of the table

"Come on, Sun," said Father, pretending not to notice

Moon lifted up her pajama legs and shuffled up to the table and stood on a chair, squeaking away

"Have a bit of this ice," said Father, smashing in some more of the roof

Mother took a little plate and held it for him, she put her other arm round his neck

"Daddy Daddy," shrieked Moon 'The little handle's left The little nut Kin I eat it?" And she reached across and picked it out of the door and scrunched it up, biting hard and blinking

"Here, my lad," said Father

But Sun did not move from the door Suddenly he put up his head and gave a loud wail

"I think it's horrid—horrid—horrid!" he sobbed

"There, you see! ' said Mother "You see!"

"Off with you," said Father, no longer jolly 'This moment Off you go!"

And wailing loudly, Sun stumped off to the nursery



## COMMENT

Here we have a story told through the consciousness of only one of the characters—the central figure—but from the third-person rather than the first-person point of view (Sun is more important than Moon, since it is he who undergoes a change from illusion to disillusion) Miss Mansfield has narrowly confined her range of perceptions to those of a young child, and not once does she violate this restriction by intruding her own adult sensitivity

This choice determines the sentence structure, which is consistently that of a child “The big piano was put in a corner and then there came a row of flower pots and then there came the goldy chairs” The language, too, is childlike “funny awfully nice hats”, “Moon made a silly of herself”, “fluffy stuff on the legs of her drawers” This point of view adds exactly the right perspective to the story, since it allows us to share Sun’s reactions to the party preparations (‘When Sun saw the nut he felt quite tired’), to feel his superiority to his sister (“she never knew the difference between real things and not real ones”), and to suffer with him the agony of Moon’s final act of betrayal (“she reached across and picked it out of the door and scrunched it up, biting hard and blinking”) Everything is enlarged to giant proportions by the child’s viewpoint and, in the process, becomes more magical and mysterious (“and all the lights were red roses”) Without this enlargement, the ultimate disillusion and betrayal would be petty, almost meaningless, but once the reader has caught Sun’s feverish excitement and expectancy and has temporarily left his own adult world (where it is a commonplace that the beautiful food will be eaten, the shining plates dirtied, and the delicate ice house broken), then he can understand Sun’s horrified wail at the end

Sun may have passed beyond Moon’s squeaking demands for attention, and he may be too wise to confuse flower pots with real hats, but he is still young enough to think that a piano tuner might be a concert musician, that the little grey man might actually care whether or not the little boy liked dogs, and that Father too is shocked and is only *pretending* not to notice the tragic destruction of the little pink house with the snow roof Miss Mansfield’s skillful handling of this difficult point of view raises a seemingly slight tale to the level of rather frightening truth Through Sun’s innocence, she reveals what the behavior of parents and of other adults really looks like to a child

## QUESTIONS ON POINT OF VIEW

1 Although this story is told through Sun’s thoughts and feelings, Miss Mansfield makes no attempt to explain his scream of revulsion at the end which is described objectively Why did she not feel it necessary to tell us about Sun’s emotions at this point? Why would such a description have been superfluous?

2 Why would this story have been something entirely different if the author had chosen to tell it from Moon’s point of view? (Note that the two

children are together throughout, and there is evidently very little difference in their ages )

3 Could "Sun and Moon" have been told from the point of view of an adult, say Mother or Father or one of the party guests? What would have been missing? Would anything have been gained?

4 Compare the point of view used here with that used by Chekhov in "A Trifle from Life." Which is the more effective?

### *Other Considerations*

1 In many respects, this story resembles "A Trifle from Life" especially since both deal with a child's disillusionment. Is the adult's betrayal of faith in the Chekhov story comparable in any way to what happens to Sun? Are the two central figures on the same plane of perception?

2 Does the little grey man with long grey whiskers play an important part in "Sun and Moon"? What makes him different from the other party guests? Why is Sun attracted to him?

3 The descriptions of the food decorations and of the dressing-up of Sun and Moon are strikingly similar. Is this similarity accidental, or does it *function* in the story? What does it tell us about the parents? about the atmosphere in which these children are growing up?

4 Are the names *Sun* and *Moon* used symbolically? How? (See "Symbolism," page 136.)

5 Section 1 of "Reading the Short Story" includes a discussion of the technique of revelation that James Joyce called the "epiphany." Does such an epiphany occur in "Sun and Moon"? When? What is revealed?

# Irony

Irony is the sense that all human enterprises necessarily turn out differently from, sometimes even opposite to, what was hoped for. We say "necessarily" if only because the person, and therefore what he hopes for, changes. Irony is also the sense that discrepancies, contradictions, and ambiguities prevail in any situation.

Irony is as pervasive in literature as in life. It takes two forms, irony of structure and irony of attitude. A general distinction between them is this: irony of structure emerges in time, out of the event—it is in the object, the work; irony of attitude is an awareness at any one moment in time—it is in the subject, the mind.

Irony of structure develops within the work of art through an unexpected turn or reversal which reveals the meaning of the action. It is most powerful when the hero is conscious of the reversal, when he discovers that he is not what he thought he was, that beneath the fair skin of appearance lies the dark blood of reality. The classic instance is *Oedipus Rex*, in which King Oedipus discovers he himself is the murderer he has been seeking. In "Death in Venice," Gustave von Aschenbach, an artist hero of "intellectual and virginal manliness," consciously abandons himself to a fatal passion for a young boy. In both works, where events take a downturn, the reversal drives in the direction of tragedy. When, as in "Gimpel the Fool" (see analysis, page 133), events take an upturn after the hero discovers his true self, the reversal drives in the direction of comedy—that is, things turn out well.

Irony of attitude develops within the reader or observer from the sense that things are not what they appear to be, that a situation is, as we have said, filled with discrepancies and contradictions. In "The Golden Honeymoon," for example, the old people are pretty much satisfied with themselves and their interests. But we are aware that their values are being treated ironically by Lardner as we see the emptiness of their lives and their ultimate isolation from each other on their fiftieth anniversary. Irony is very often directed against innocence, the simple, pathetic innocence of the golden honeymooners or the tragic innocence of King Oedipus or King Lear, or against social and religious behavior—in "Grace," for example, in the treatment of the businessman's religion, where God is conceived of as a spiritual accountant. Rhetorically, the ironic attitude expresses itself in many forms: in paradox (the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing about), in understatement (it's pleasant to inherit a million dollars), in exaggeration and sarcasm (how

marvelous' a dollar raise!'), and in many tones wry, sardonic, bitter, or humorous. In general, the ironic attitude reveals an ability to hold contradictory ideas in the mind at the same time.

But where the ironic attitude is content only with complexity, the sentimental attitude is content only with simplicity. Sentimentality (not to be confused with sentiment) is the opposite of irony, and we need to understand both to fully understand either. Good writers abhor sentimentality, and the reader may rightly ask why. It is genuine feeling, true, but mostly about oneself. When a sentimental lover "moons" over his lady, or when a sentimental patriot sobs at the sight of the flag, both certainly have feelings about these objects, but more important to them—*without their being aware of it*—is the enjoyment of their own feelings (something quite different from a passion fully directed at someone else). Luxuriating in his feelings, the sentimentalist takes an uncritical, oversimplified view of the object. The mind, the seat of irony, abdicates. Irony is a function of mind at its critical best, sentimentality is a function of feeling at its self-indulgent worst. Thus, sentimentality makes for immature living and art. Sentimental art is simple melodrama. Here characters are all good or evil, all black or white—not, as they really are, a mixture of these. Thus, we weep over the poor widow, the neglected mother, the jilted country girl, and the tortured political prisoner, and hiss at the villains. The pity of it is that our tears express not our personal, but our conventional, stock response to a stock situation. Our feelings have been manipulated, not moved.

Irony is a way of regarding life that is dear to writers, and we might enlarge on this further by clearing up one popular misconception about it. Even so wise a philosopher as Whitehead can only deplore irony, saying that it "signifies the state of mind of people of an age which has lost faith. They conceal their loss, or even flaunt it by laughter. You seldom get irony except from people who have been somehow more or less cleaned out."<sup>11</sup> This is the popular charge, and certainly a fair one in some instances. But it does not account for the feeling in the bitterly ironic remarks of Hamlet or of the fool in *Lear*, or in the ironic laughter of Homer. Shakespeare and Homer, unlike logical philosophers, find irony compatible with reverence and passion; they have a passionate belief in life while also feeling dismay, bitterness, horror, or amusement at its shortcomings. And, far from the triviality usually associated with it, the ironic sensibility is particularly conscious of the supreme irony, death—that blank contradiction of all our aspirations. This leads to a tragic sense of life, ironic in that it is stubbornly affirmative. As F. Scott Fitzgerald once defined it, the tragic sense is a feeling "that life is essentially

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<sup>11</sup> From *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead* by Lucien Price. Copyright 1954 by Little Brown & Company. Reprinted by permission.

## IRONY

t and its conditions are those of defeat, and that the redeeming are not 'happiness and pleasure' but the deeper satisfactions that out of struggle" <sup>12</sup> In this collection the tragic sense is variously 1 (on a lesser scale, certainly, than that of Shakespeare) in the of Mann, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Kafka, and others Similarly 1 is the comic sense—to which irony is also central—as in the of Boll, Frank O'Connor, Singer, and de Maupassant Here the attitude, while always critical, is often *at the same time* gay and

ie following two stories, "The Artificial Nigger" will be examined 1y of structure and "Gimpel the Fool" for irony of attitude We understand, however, that each story has both kinds

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Directions

# The Artificial Nigger

*Flannery O'Connor*

Mr Head awakened to discover that the room was full of moonlight. He sat up and stared at the floor boards—the color of silver—and then at the ticking on his pillow, which might have been brocade, and after a second, he saw half of the moon five feet away in his shaving mirror, paused as if it were waiting for his permission to enter. It rolled forward and cast a dignifying light on everything. The straight chair against the wall looked stiff and attentive as if it were awaiting an order and Mr Head's trousers, hanging to the back of it, had an almost noble air, like the garment some great man had just flung to his servant, but the face on the moon was a grave one. It gazed across the room and out the window where it floated over the horse stall and appeared to contemplate itself with the look of a young man who sees his old age before him.

Mr Head could have said to it that age was a choice blessing and that only with years does a man enter into that calm understanding of life that makes him a suitable guide for the young. This, at least, had been his own experience.

He sat up and grasped the iron posts at the foot of his bed and raised himself until he could see the face on the alarm clock which sat on an overturned bucket beside the chair. The hour was two in the morning. The alarm on the clock did not work but he was not dependent on any mechanical means to awaken him. Sixty years had not dulled his responses, his physical reactions, like his moral ones, were guided by his will and strong character, and these could be seen plainly in his features. He had a long tube-like face with a long rounded open jaw and a long depressed nose. His eyes were alert but quiet, and in the miraculous moonlight they had a look of composure and of ancient wisdom as if they belonged to one of the great guides of men. He might have been Vergil summoned in the middle of the night to go to Dante, or better, Raphael, awakened by a blast of God's light to fly to the side of Tobias. The only dark spot in the room was Nelson's pallet, underneath the shadow of the window.

Nelson was hunched over on his side, his knees under his chin and his heels under his bottom. His new suit and hat were in the boxes that they had been sent in and these were on the floor at the foot of the pallet.

*From A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND AND OTHER STORIES by Flannery O'Connor Copyright 1953, 1954 1955 by Flannery O'Connor Reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace and Company Inc*

where he could get his hands on them as soon as he woke up. The slop jar, out of the shadow and made snow-white in the moonlight, appeared to stand guard over him like a small personal angel. Mr. Head lay back down, feeling entirely confident that he could carry out the moral mission of the coming day. He meant to be up before Nelson and to have the breakfast cooking by the time he awakened. The boy was always irked when Mr. Head was the first up. They would have to leave the house at four to get to the railroad junction by five-thirty. The train was to stop for them at five forty-five and they had to be there on time for this train was stopping merely to accommodate them.

This would be the boy's first trip to the city though he claimed it would be his second because he had been born there. Mr. Head had tried to point out to him that when he was born he didn't have the intelligence to determine his whereabouts but this had made no impression on the child at all and he continued to insist that this was to be his second trip. It would be Mr. Head's third trip. Nelson had said, "I will've already been there twice and I ain't but ten."

Mr. Head had contradicted him.

"If you ain't been there in fifteen years, how you know you'll be able to find your way about?" Nelson had asked. "How you know it hasn't changed some?"

"Have you ever," Mr. Head had asked, "seen me lost?"

Nelson certainly had not but he was a child who was never satisfied until he had given an impudent answer and he replied, "It's nowhere around here to get lost at."

"The day is going to come," Mr. Head prophesied, "when you'll find you ain't as smart as you think you are." He had been thinking about this trip for several months but it was for the most part in moral terms that he conceived it. It was to be a lesson that the boy would never forget. He was to find out from it that he had no cause for pride merely because he had been born in a city. He was to find out that the city is not a great place. Mr. Head meant him to see everything there is to see in a city so that he would be content to stay at home for the rest of his life. He fell asleep thinking how the boy would at last find out that he was not as smart as he thought he was.

He was awakened at three-thirty by the smell of fatback frying and he leaped off his cot. The pallet was empty and the clothes boxes had been thrown open. He put on his trousers and ran into the other room. The boy had a corn pone on cooking and had fried the meat. He was sitting in the half-dark at the table, drinking cold coffee out of a can. He had on his new suit and his new gray hat pulled low over his eyes. It was too big for him but they had ordered it a size large because they expected his head to grow. He didn't say anything but his entire figure suggested satisfaction at having arisen before Mr. Head.

Mr Head went to the stove and brought the meat to the table in the skillet "It's no hurry," he said "You'll get there soon enough and it's no guarantee you'll like it when you do neither," and he sat down across from the boy whose hat teetered back slowly to reveal a fiercely expressionless face, very much the same shape as the old man's. They were grandfather and grandson but they looked enough alike to be brothers and brothers not too far apart in age, for Mr Head had a youthful expression by daylight, while the boy's look was ancient, as if he knew everything already and would be pleased to forget it.

Mr Head had once had a wife and daughter and when the wife died, the daughter ran away and returned after an interval with Nelson. Then one morning, without getting out of bed, she died and left Mr Head with sole care of the year-old child. He had made the mistake of telling Nelson that he had been born in Atlanta. If he hadn't told him that, Nelson couldn't have insisted that this was going to be his second trip.

"You may not like it a bit," Mr Head continued "It'll be full of niggers."

The boy made a face as if he could handle a nigger.

"All right," Mr Head said "You ain't ever seen a nigger."

"You wasn't up very early," Nelson said.

"You ain't ever seen a nigger," Mr Head repeated "There hasn't been a nigger in this county since we run that one out twelve years ago and that was before you were born." He looked at the boy as if he were daring him to say he had ever seen a Negro.

"How you know I never saw a nigger when I lived there before?" Nelson asked "I probably saw a lot of niggers."

"If you seen one you didn't know what he was," Mr Head said, completely exasperated "A six-month-old child don't know a nigger from anybody else."

"I reckon I'll know a nigger if I see one," the boy said and got up and straightened his slick sharply creased gray hat and went outside to the privy.

They reached the junction some time before the train was due to arrive and stood about two feet from the first set of tracks. Mr Head carried a paper sack with some biscuits and a can of sardines in it for their lunch. A coarse-looking orange-colored sun coming up behind the east range of mountains was making the sky a dull red behind them, but in front of them it was still gray and they faced a gray transparent moon, hardly stronger than a thumbprint and completely without light. A small tin switch box and a black fuel tank were all there was to mark the place as a junction, the tracks were double and did not converge again until they were hidden behind the bends at either end of the clearing. Trains passing appeared to emerge from a tunnel of trees and, hit for a



second by the cold sky, vanish terrified into the woods again Mr Head had had to make special arrangements with the ticket agent to have this train stop and he was secretly afraid it would not, in which case, he knew Nelson would say, "I never thought no train was going to stop for you " Under the useless morning moon the tracks looked white and fragile Both the old man and the child stared ahead as if they were awaiting an apparition

Then suddenly, before Mr Head could make up his mind to turn back, there was a deep warning bleat and the train appeared, gliding very slowly, almost silently around the bend of trees about two hundred yards down the track, with one yellow front light shining Mr Head was still not certain it would stop and he felt it would make an even bigger idiot of him if it went by slowly But he and Nelson, however, were prepared to ignore the train if it passed them

The engine charged by, filling their noses with the smell of hot metal and then the second coach came to a stop exactly where they were standing A conductor with the face of an ancient bloated bulldog was on the step as if he expected them, though he did not look as if it mattered one way or the other to him if they got on or not "To the right," he said

Their entry took only a fraction of a second and the train was already speeding on as they entered the quiet car Most of the travelers were still sleeping, some with their heads hanging off the chair arms, some stretched across two seats, and some sprawled out with their feet in the aisle Mr Head saw two unoccupied seats and pushed Nelson toward them "Get in there by the winder," he said in his normal voice which was very loud at this hour of the morning "Nobody cares if you set there because it's nobody in it Sit right there "

"I heard you," the boy muttered "It's no use in you yelling," and he sat down and turned his head to the glass There he saw a pale ghost-like face scowling at him beneath the brim of a pale ghost-like hat His grandfather, looking quickly too, saw a different ghost, pale but grinning, under a black hat

Mr Head sat down and settled himself and took out his ticket and started reading aloud everything that was printed on it People began to stir Several woke up and stared at him "Take off your hat," he said to Nelson and took off his own and put it on his knee He had a small amount of white hair that had turned tobacco-colored over the years and this lay flat across the back of his head The front of his head was bald and creased Nelson took off his hat and put it on his knee and they waited for the conductor to come ask for their tickets

The man across the aisle from them was spread out over two seats his feet propped on the window and his head jutting into the aisle He had on a light blue suit and a yellow shirt unbuttoned at the neck His

eyes had just opened and Mr Head was ready to introduce himself when the conductor came up from behind and growled, "Tickets"

When the conductor had gone, Mr Head gave Nelson the return half of his ticket and said, "Now put that in your pocket and don't lose it or you'll have to stay in the city"

"Maybe I will," Nelson said as if this were a reasonable suggestion

Mr Head ignored him "First time this boy has ever been on a train," he explained to the man across the aisle, who was sitting up now on the edge of his seat with both feet on the floor

Nelson jerked his hat on again and turned angrily to the window

"He's never seen anything before," Mr Head continued "Ignorant as the day he was born, but I mean for him to get his fill once and for all"

The boy leaned forward, across his grandfather and toward the stranger "I was born in the city," he said 'I was born there This is my second trip' He said it in a high positive voice but the man across the aisle didn't look as if he understood There were heavy purple circles under his eyes

Mr Head reached across the aisle and tapped him on the arm "The thing to do with a boy," he said sagely, "is to show him all it is to show Don't hold nothing back"

"Yeah," the man said He gazed down at his swollen feet and lifted the left one about ten inches from the floor After a minute he put it down and lifted the other All through the car people began to get up and move about and yawn and stretch Separate voices could be heard here and there and then a general hum Suddenly Mr Head's serene expression changed His mouth almost closed and a light, fierce and cautious both, came into his eyes He was looking down the length of the car Without turning, he caught Nelson by the arm and pulled him forward 'Look,' he said

A huge coffee-colored man was coming slowly forward He had on a light suit and a yellow satin tie with a ruby pin on it One of his hands rested on his stomach which rode majestically under his buttoned coat, and in the other he held the head of a black walking stick that he picked up and set down with a deliberate outward motion each time he took a step He was proceeding very slowly, his large brown eyes gazing over the heads of the passengers He had a small white mustache and white crinkly hair Behind him there were two young women, both coffee-colored, one in a yellow dress and one in a green Their progress was kept at the rate of his and they chatted in low throaty voices as they followed him

Mr Head's grip was tightening insistently on Nelson's arm As the procession passed them the light from a sapphire ring on the brown

hand that picked up the cane reflected in Mr Head's eye, but he did not look up nor did the tremendous man look at him. The group proceeded up the rest of the aisle and out of the car. Mr Head's grip on Nelson's arm loosened. "What was that?" he asked.

"A man," the boy said and gave him an indignant look as if he were tired of having his intelligence insulted.

"What kind of a man?" Mr Head persisted, his voice expressionless.

"A fat man," Nelson said. He was beginning to feel that he had better be cautious.

"You don't know what kind?" Mr Head said in a final tone.

"An old man," the boy said and had a sudden foreboding that he was not going to enjoy the day.

"That was a nigger," Mr Head said and sat back.

Nelson jumped up on the seat and stood looking backward to the end of the car but the Negro had gone.

"I'd of thought you'd know a nigger since you seen so many when you was in the city on your first visit," Mr Head continued. "That's his first nigger," he said to the man across the aisle.

The boy slid down into the seat. "You said they were black," he said in an angry voice. "You never said they were tan. How do you expect me to know anything when you don't tell me right?"

"You're just ignorant is all," Mr Head said and he got up and moved over in the vacant seat by the man across the aisle.

Nelson turned backward again and looked where the Negro had disappeared. He felt that the Negro had deliberately walked down the aisle in order to make a fool of him and he hated him with a fierce raw fresh hate, and also, he understood now why his grandfather disliked them. He looked toward the window and the face there seemed to suggest that he might be inadequate to the day's exactions. He wondered if he would even recognize the city when they came to it.

After he had told several stories, Mr Head realized that the man he was talking to was asleep and he got up and suggested to Nelson that they walk over the train and see the parts of it. He particularly wanted the boy to see the toilet so they went first to the men's room and examined the plumbing. Mr Head demonstrated the ice-water cooler as if he had invented it and showed Nelson the bowl with the single spigot where the travelers brushed their teeth. They went through several cars and came to the diner.

This was the most elegant car in the train. It was painted a rich egg-yellow and had a wine-colored carpet on the floor. There were wide windows over the tables and great spaces of the rolling view were caught in miniature in the sides of the coffee pots and in the glasses. Three very black Negroes in white suits and aprons were running up and down the

aisle, swinging trays and bowing and bending over the travelers eating breakfast One of them rushed up to Mr Head and Nelson and said, holding up two fingers, "Space for two!" but Mr Head replied in a loud voice, "We eaten before we left!"

The waiter wore large brown spectacles that increased the size of his eye whites "Stan' aside then please," he said with an airy wave of the arm as if he were brushing aside flies

Neither Nelson nor Mr Head moved a fraction of an inch "Look," Mr Head said

The near corner of the diner, containing two tables, was set off from the rest by a saffron-colored curtain One table was set but empty but at the other, facing them, his back to the drape, sat the tremendous Negro He was speaking in a soft voice to the two women while he buttered a muffin He had a heavy sad face and his neck bulged over his white collar on either side "They rope them off," Mr Head explained Then he said, "Let's go see the kitchen," and they walked the length of the diner but the black waiter was coming fast behind them

"Passengers are not allowed in the kitchen!" he said in a haughty voice "Passengers are NOT allowed in the kitchen!"

Mr Head stopped where he was and turned "And there's good reason for that," he shouted into the Negro's chest, "because the cockroaches would run the passengers out!"

All the travelers laughed and Mr Head and Nelson walked out, grinning Mr Head was known at home for his quick wit and Nelson felt a sudden keen pride in him He realized the old man would be his only support in the strange place they were approaching He would be entirely alone in the world if he were ever lost from his grandfather A terrible excitement shook him and he wanted to take hold of Mr Head's coat and hold on like a child

As they went back to their seats they could see through the passing windows that the countryside was becoming speckled with small houses and shacks and that a highway ran alongside the train Cars sped by on it, very small and fast Nelson felt that there was less breath in the air than there had been thirty minutes ago The man across the aisle had left and there was no one near for Mr Head to hold a conversation with so he looked out the window, through his own reflection, and read aloud the names of the buildings they were passing 'The Dixie Chemical Corp!" he announced "Southern Maid Flour! Dixie Doors! Southern Belle Cotton Products! Patty's Peanut Butter! Southern Mammy Cane Syrup!"

"Hush up!" Nelson hissed

All over the car people were beginning to get up and take their luggage off the overhead racks Women were putting on their coats and hats

The conductor stuck his head in the car and snarled, "Firstopppppmry," and Nelson lunged out of his sitting position, trembling. Mr. Head pushed him down by the shoulder.

"Keep your seat," he said in dignified tones. "The first stop is on the edge of town. The second stop is at the main railroad station." He had come by this knowledge on his first trip when he had got off at the first stop and had had to pay a man fifteen cents to take him into the heart of town. Nelson sat back down, very pale. For the first time in his life, he understood that his grandfather was indispensable to him.

The train stopped and let off a few passengers and glided on as if it had never ceased moving. Outside, behind rows of brown rickety houses, a line of blue buildings stood up, and beyond them a pale rose-gray sky faded away to nothing. The train moved into the railroad yard. Looking down, Nelson saw lines and lines of silver tracks multiplying and criss-crossing. Then before he could start counting them, the face in the window stared out at him, gray but distinct, and he looked the other way. The train was in the station. Both he and Mr. Head jumped up and ran to the door. Neither noticed that they had left the paper sack with the lunch in it on the seat.

They walked stiffly through the small station and came out of a heavy door into the squall of traffic. Crowds were hurrying to work. Nelson didn't know where to look. Mr. Head leaned against the side of the building and glared in front of him.

Finally Nelson said, "Well, how do you see what all it is to see?"

Mr. Head didn't answer. Then as if the sight of people passing had given him the clue, he said, "You walk," and started off down the street. Nelson followed, steadying his hat. So many sights and sounds were flooding in on him that for the first block he hardly knew what he was seeing. At the second corner, Mr. Head turned and looked behind him at the station they had left, a putty-colored terminal with a concrete dome on top. He thought that if he could keep the dome always in sight, he would be able to get back in the afternoon to catch the train again.

As they walked along, Nelson began to distinguish details and take note of the store windows, jammed with every kind of equipment—hardware, drygoods, chicken feed, liquor. They passed one that Mr. Head called his particular attention to where you walked in and sat on a chair with your feet upon two rests and let a Negro polish your shoes. They walked slowly and stopped and stood at the entrances so he could see what went on in each place but they did not go into any of them. Mr. Head was determined not to go into any city store because on his first trip here, he had got lost in a large one and had found his way out only after many people had insulted him.

They came in the middle of the next block to a store that had a weighing machine in front of it and they both in turn stepped up on it and put

in a penny and received a ticket Mr Head's ticket said, "You weigh 120 pounds You are upright and brave and all your friends admire you" He put the ticket in his pocket, surprised that the machine should have got his character correct but his weight wrong, for he had weighed on a grain scale not long before and knew he weighed 110 Nelson's ticket said, "You weigh 98 pounds You have a great destiny ahead of you but beware of dark women" Nelson did not know any women and he weighed only 68 pounds but Mr Head pointed out that the machine had probably printed the number upsidedown, meaning the 9 for a 6

They walked on and at the end of five blocks the dome of the terminal sank out of sight and Mr Head turned to the left Nelson could have stood in front of every store window for an hour if there had not been another more interesting one next to it Suddenly he said, "I was born here!" Mr Head turned and looked at him with horror There was a sweaty brightness about his face "This is where I come from!" he said

Mr Head was appalled He saw the moment had come for drastic action "Lemme show you one thing you ain't seen yet," he said and took him to the corner where there was a sewer entrance "Squat down," he said, "and stick your head in there," and he held the back of the boy's coat while he got down and put his head in the sewer He drew it back quickly, hearing a gurgling in the depths under the sidewalk Then Mr Head explained the sewer system, how the entire city was underlined with it, how it contained all the drainage and was full of rats and how a man could slide into it and be sucked along down endless pitchblack tunnels At any minute any man in the city might be sucked into the sewer and never heard from again He described it so well that Nelson was for some seconds shaken He connected the sewer passages with the entrance to hell and understood for the first time how the world was put together in its lower parts He drew away from the curb

Then he said, "Yes, but you can stay away from the holes," and his face took on that stubborn look that was so exasperating to his grandfather "This is where I come from!" he said

Mr Head was dismayed but he only muttered, "You'll get your fill," and they walked on At the end of two more blocks he turned to the left, feeling that he was circling the dome, and he was correct for in a half-hour they passed in front of the railroad station again At first Nelson did not notice that he was seeing the same stores twice but when they passed the one where you put your feet on the rests while the Negro polished your shoes, he perceived that they were walking in a circle

"We done been here!" he shouted "I don't believe you know where you're at!"

"The direction just slipped my mind for a minute," Mr Head said and they turned down a different street He still did not intend to let the dome get too far away and after two blocks in their new direction, he

turned to the left This street contained two- and three-story wooden dwellings Anyone passing on the sidewalk could see into the rooms and Mr Head, glancing through one window, saw a woman lying on an iron bed, looking out, with a sheet pulled over her Her knowing expression shook him A fierce-looking boy on a bicycle came driving down out of nowhere and he had to jump to the side to keep from being hit "It's nothing to them if they knock you down," he said "You better keep closer to me"

They walked on for some time on streets like this before he remembered to turn again The houses they were passing now were all unpainted and the wood in them looked rotten, the street between was narrower Nelson saw a colored man Then another Then another "Niggers live in these houses," he observed

"Well come on and we'll go somewhere else," Mr Head said "We didn't come to look at niggers," and they turned down another street but they continued to see Negroes everywhere Nelson's skin began to prickle and they stepped along at a faster pace in order to leave the neighborhood as soon as possible There were colored men in their undershirts standing in the doors and colored women rocking on the sagging porches Colored children played in the gutters and stopped what they were doing to look at them Before long they began to pass rows of stores with colored customers in them but they didn't pause at the entrances of these Black eyes in black faces were watching them from every direction "Yes," Mr Head said, "this is where you were born—right here with all these niggers"

Nelson scowled "I think you done got us lost," he said

Mr Head swung around sharply and looked for the dome It was nowhere in sight "I ain't got us lost either," he said "You're just tired of walking"

"I ain't tired, I'm hungry," Nelson said "Give me a biscuit"

They discovered then that they had lost the lunch

"You were the one holding the sack," Nelson said "I would have kepholt of it"

"If you want to direct this trip, I'll go on by myself and leave you right here," Mr Head said and was pleased to see the boy turn white However, he realized they were lost and drifting farther every minute from the station He was hungry himself and beginning to be thirsty and since they had been in the colored neighborhood, they had both begun to sweat Nelson had on his shoes and he was unaccustomed to them The concrete sidewalks were very hard They both wanted to find a place to sit down but this was impossible and they kept on walking, the boy muttering under his breath, "First you lost the sack and then you lost the way," and Mr Head growling from time to time, "Anybody wants to be from this nigger heaven can be from it!"

By now the sun was well forward in the sky The odor of dinners cooking drifted out to them The Negroes were all at their doors to see them pass "Whyn't you ast one of these niggers the way?" Nelson said "You got us lost"

"This is where you were born," Mr Head said "You can ast one yourself if you want to"

Nelson was afraid of the colored men and he didn't want to be laughed at by the colored children Up ahead he saw a large colored woman leaning in a doorway that opened onto the sidewalk Her hair stood straight out from her head for about four inches all around and she was resting on bare brown feet that turned pink at the sides She had on a pink dress that showed her exact shape As they came abreast of her, she lazily lifted one hand to her head and her fingers disappeared into her hair

Nelson stopped He felt his breath drawn up by the woman's dark eyes "How do you get back to town?" he said in a voice that did not sound like his own

After a minute she said, "You in town now," in a rich low tone that made Nelson feel as if a cool spray had been turned on him

"How do you get back to the train?" he said in the same reed-like voice

"You can catch you a car," she said

He understood she was making fun of him but he was too paralyzed even to scowl He stood drinking in every detail of her His eyes traveled up from her great knees to her forehead and then made a triangular path from the glistening sweat on her neck down and across her tremendous bosom and over her bare arm back to where her fingers lay hidden in her hair He suddenly wanted her to reach down and pick him up and draw him against her and then he wanted to feel her breath on his face He wanted to look down and down into her eyes while she held him tighter and tighter He had never had such a feeling before He felt as if he were reeling down through a pitchblack tunnel

"You can go a block down yonder and catch you a car take you to the railroad station, Sugarpie," she said

Nelson would have collapsed at her feet if Mr Head had not pulled him roughly away "You act like you don't have any sense!" the old man growled

They hurried down the street and Nelson did not look back at the woman He pushed his hat sharply forward over his face which was already burning with shame The sneering ghost he had seen in the train window and all the foreboding feelings he had on the way returned to him and he remembered that his ticket from the scale had said to beware of dark women and that his grandfather's had said he was upright and brave He took hold of the old man's hand, a sign of dependence that he seldom showed



They headed down the street toward the car tracks where a long yellow rattling trolley was coming. Mr. Head had never boarded a streetcar and he let that one pass. Nelson was silent. From time to time his mouth trembled slightly but his grandfather, occupied with his own problems, paid him no attention. They stood on the corner and neither looked at the Negroes who were passing, going about their business just as if they had been white, except that most of them stopped and eyed Mr. Head and Nelson. It occurred to Mr. Head that since the streetcar ran on tracks, they could simply follow the tracks. He gave Nelson a slight push and explained that they would follow the tracks on into the railroad station, walking, and they set off.

Presently to their great relief they began to see white people again and Nelson sat down on the sidewalk against the wall of a building. "I got to rest myself some," he said. "You lost the sack and the direction. You can just wait on me to rest myself."

"There's the tracks in front of us," Mr. Head said. "All we got to do is keep them in sight and you could have remembered the sack as good as me. This is where you were born. This is your old home town. This is your second trip. You ought to know how to do," and he squatted down and continued in this vein but the boy, easing his burning feet out of his shoes, did not answer.

"And standing there grinning like a chim-pan-zee while a nigger woman gives you directions. Great Gawd!" Mr. Head said.

"I never said I was nothing but born here," the boy said in a shaky voice. "I never said I would or wouldn't like it. I never said I wanted to come. I only said I was born here and I never had nothing to do with that. I want to go home. I never wanted to come in the first place. It was all your big idea. How you know you ain't following the tracks in the wrong direction?"

This last had occurred to Mr. Head too. "All these people are white," he said.

"We ain't passed here before," Nelson said. This was a neighborhood of brick buildings that might have been lived in or might not. A few empty automobiles were parked along the curb and there was an occasional passerby. The heat of the pavement came up through Nelson's thin suit. His eyelids began to droop, and after a few minutes his head tilted forward. His shoulders twitched once or twice and then he fell over on his side and lay sprawled in an exhausted fit of sleep.

Mr. Head watched him silently. He was very tired himself but they could not both sleep at the same time and he could not have slept anyway because he did not know where he was. In a few minutes Nelson would wake up, refreshed by his sleep and very cocky, and would begin complaining that he had lost the sack and the way. You'd have a mighty

sorry time if I wasn't here, Mr Head thought, and then another idea occurred to him. He looked at the sprawled figure for several minutes, presently he stood up. He justified what he was going to do on the grounds that it is sometimes necessary to teach a child a lesson he won't forget, particularly when the child is always reasserting his position with some new impudence. He walked without a sound to the corner about twenty feet away and sat down on a covered garbage can in the alley where he could look out and watch Nelson wake up alone.

The boy was dozing fitfully, half conscious of vague noises and black forms moving up from some dark part of him into the light. His face worked in his sleep and he had pulled his knees up under his chin. The sun shed a dull dry light on the narrow street, everything looked like exactly what it was. After a while Mr Head, hunched like an old monkey on the garbage can lid, decided that if Nelson didn't wake up soon, he would make a loud noise by bammung his foot against the can. He looked at his watch and discovered that it was two o'clock. Their train left at six and the possibility of missing it was too awful for him to think of. He kicked his foot backwards on the can and a hollow boom reverberated in the alley.

Nelson shot up onto his feet with a shout. He looked where his grandfather should have been and stared. He seemed to whirl several times and then, picking up his feet and throwing his head back, he dashed down the street like a wild maddened pony. Mr Head jumped off the can and galloped after but the child was almost out of sight. He saw a streak of gray disappearing diagonally a block ahead. He ran as fast as he could, looking both ways down every intersection, but without sight of him again. Then as he passed the third intersection completely winded, he saw about half a block down the street a scene that stopped him altogether. He crouched behind a trash box to watch and get his bearings.

Nelson was sitting with both legs spread out and by his side lay an elderly woman, screaming. Groceries were scattered about the sidewalk. A crowd of women had already gathered to see justice done and Mr Head distinctly heard the old woman on the pavement shout, "You've broken my ankle and your daddy'll pay for it! Every nickel! Police! Police!" Several of the women were plucking at Nelson's shoulder but the boy seemed too dazed to get up.

Something forced Mr Head from behind the trash box and forward, but only at a creeping pace. He had never in his life been accosted by a policeman. The women were milling around Nelson as if they might suddenly all dive on him at once and tear him to pieces, and the old woman continued to scream that her ankle was broken and to call for an officer. Mr Head came on so slowly that he could have been taking

a backward step after each forward one, but when he was about ten feet away, Nelson saw him and sprang. The child caught him around the hips and clung panting against him.

The women all turned on Mr. Head. The injured one sat up and shouted, "You sir! You'll pay every penny of my doctor's bill that your boy has caused. He's a juvenile delinquent! Where is an officer? Some body take this man's name and address!"

Mr. Head was trying to detach Nelson's fingers from the flesh in the back of his legs. The old man's head had lowered itself into his collar like a turtle, his eyes were glazed with fear and caution.

"Your boy has broken my ankle!" the old woman shouted. "Police!"

Mr. Head sensed the approach of the policeman from behind. He stared straight ahead at the women who were massed in their fury like a solid wall to block his escape. "This is not my boy," he said. "I never seen him before."

He felt Nelson's fingers fall out of his flesh.

The women dropped back, staring at him with horror, as if they were so repulsed by a man who would deny his own image and likeness that they could not bear to lay hands on him. Mr. Head walked on, through a space they silently cleared, and left Nelson behind. Ahead of him he saw nothing but a hollow tunnel that had once been the street.

The boy remained standing where he was, his neck craned forward and his hands hanging by his sides. His hat was jammed on his head so that there were no longer any creases in it. The injured woman got up and shook her fist at him and the others gave him pitying looks, but he didn't notice any of them. There was no policeman in sight.

In a minute he began to move mechanically, making no effort to catch up with his grandfather but merely following at about twenty paces. They walked on for five blocks in this way. Mr. Head's shoulders were sagging and his neck hung forward at such an angle that it was not visible from behind. He was afraid to turn his head. Finally he cut a short hopeful glance over his shoulder. Twenty feet behind him, he saw two small eyes piercing into his back like pitchfork prongs.

The boy was not of a forgiving nature but this was the first time he had ever had anything to forgive. Mr. Head had never disgraced himself before. After two more blocks, he turned and called over his shoulder in a high desperately gay voice, "Let's us go get us a Co' Cola somewhere!"

Nelson, with a dignity he had never shown before, turned and stood with his back to his grandfather.

Mr. Head began to feel the depth of his denial. His face as they walked on became all hollows and bare ridges. He saw nothing they were passing but he perceived that they had lost the car tracks. There was no dome to be seen anywhere and the afternoon was advancing.

He knew that if dark overtook them in the city, they would be beaten and robbed. The speed of God's justice was only what he expected for himself, but he could not stand to think that his sins would be visited upon Nelson and that even now, he was leading the boy to his doom.

They continued to walk on block after block through an endless section of small brick houses until Mr. Head almost fell over a water spigot sticking up about six inches off the edge of a grass plot. He had not had a drink of water since early morning but he felt he did not deserve it now. Then he thought that Nelson would be thirsty and they would both drink and be brought together. He squatted down and put his mouth to the nozzle and turned a cold stream of water into his throat. Then he called out in the high desperate voice, "Come on and getcher some water!"

This time the child stared through him for nearly sixty seconds. Mr. Head got up and walked on as if he had drunk poison. Nelson, though he had not had water since some he had drunk out of a paper cup on the train, passed by the spigot, disdaining to drink where his grandfather had. When Mr. Head realized this, he lost all hope. His face in the waning afternoon light looked ravaged and abandoned. He could feel the boy's steady hate, traveling at an even pace behind him and he knew that (if by some miracle they escaped being murdered in the city) it would continue just that way for the rest of his life. He knew that now he was wandering into a black strange place where nothing was like it had ever been before, a long old age without respect and an end that would be welcome because it would be the end.

As for Nelson, his mind had frozen around his grandfather's treachery as if he were trying to preserve it intact to present at the final judgment. He walked without looking to one side or the other, but every now and then his mouth would twitch and this was when he felt, from some remote place inside himself, a black mysterious form reach up as if it would melt his frozen vision in one hot grasp.

The sun dropped down behind a row of houses and hardly noticing, they passed into an elegant suburban section where mansions were set back from the road by lawns with birdbaths on them. Here everything was entirely deserted. For blocks they didn't pass even a dog. The big white houses were like partially submerged icebergs in the distance. There were no sidewalks, only drives and these wound around and around in endless ridiculous circles. Nelson made no move to come nearer to Mr. Head. The old man felt that if he saw a sewer entrance he would drop down into it and let himself be carried away, and he could imagine the boy standing by, watching with only a slight interest, while he disappeared.

A loud bark jarred him to attention and he looked up to see a fat man approaching with two bulldogs. He waved both arms like someone

shipwrecked on a desert island "I'm lost!" he called "I'm lost and can't find my way and me and this boy have got to catch this train and I can't find the station Oh Gawd I'm lost! Oh help me Gawd I'm lost!"

The man, who was bald-headed and had on golf knickers, asked him what train he was trying to catch and Mr Head began to get out his tickets, trembling so violently he could hardly hold them Nelson had come up to within fifteen feet and stood watching

"Well," the fat man said, giving him back the tickets, "you won't have time to get back to town to make this but you can catch it at the suburb stop That's three blocks from here," and he began explaining how to get there

Mr Head stared as if he were slowly returning from the dead and when the man had finished and gone off with the dogs jumping at his heels, he turned to Nelson and said breathlessly, "We're going to get home!"

The child was standing about ten feet away, his face bloodless under the gray hat His eyes were triumphantly cold There was no light in them, no feeling, no interest He was merely there, a small figure, waiting Home was nothing to him

Mr Head turned slowly He felt he knew now what time would be like without seasons and what heat would be like without light and what man would be like without salvation He didn't care if he never made the train and if it had not been for what suddenly caught his attention, like a cry out of the gathering dusk, he might have forgotten there was a station to go to

He had not walked five hundred yards down the road when he saw, within reach of him, the plaster figure of a Negro sitting bent over on a low yellow brick fence that curved around a wide lawn The Negro was about Nelson's size and he was pitched forward at an unsteady angle because the putty that held him to the wall had cracked One of his eyes was entirely white and he held a piece of brown watermelon

Mr Head stood looking at him silently until Nelson stopped at a little distance Then as the two of them stood there, Mr Head breathed, "An artificial nigger!"

It was not possible to tell if the artificial Negro were meant to be young or old, he looked too miserable to be either He was meant to look happy because his mouth was stretched up at the corners but the chipped eye and the angle he was cocked at gave him a wild look of misery instead

"An artificial nigger!" Nelson repeated in Mr Head's exact tone

The two of them stood there with their necks forward at almost the same angle and their shoulders curved in almost exactly the same way and their hands trembling identically in their pockets Mr Head looked

like an ancient child and Nelson like a miniature old man They stood gazing at the artificial Negro as if they were faced with some great mystery, some monument to another's victory that brought them together in their common defeat They could both feel it dissolving their differences like an action of mercy Mr Head had never known before what mercy felt like because he had been too good to deserve any, but he felt he knew now He looked at Nelson and understood that he must say something to the child to show that he was still wise and in the look the boy returned he saw a hungry need for that assurance Nelson's eyes seemed to implore him to explain once and for all the mystery of existence

Mr Head opened his lips to make a lofty statement and heard himself say, "They ain't got enough real ones here They got to have an artificial one"

After a second, the boy nodded with a strange shivering about his mouth, and said, "Let's go home before we get ourselves lost again"

Their train glided into the suburb stop just as they reached the station and they boarded it together, and ten minutes before it was due to arrive at the junction, they went to the door and stood ready to jump off if it did not stop, but it did, just as the moon, restored to its full splendor, sprang from a cloud and flooded the clearing with light As they stepped off, the sage grass was shivering gently in shades of silver and the clinkers under their feet glittered with a fresh black light The treetops, fencing the junction like the protecting walls of a garden, were darker than the sky which was hung with gigantic white clouds illuminated like lanterns

Mr Head stood very still and felt the action of mercy touch him again but this time he knew that there were no words in the world that could name it He understood that it grew out of agony, which is not denied to any man and which is given in strange ways to children He understood it was all a man could carry into death to give his Maker and he suddenly burned with shame that he had so little of it to take with him He stood appalled, judging himself with the thoroughness of God, while the action of mercy covered his pride like a flame and consumed it He had never thought himself a great sinner before but he saw now that his true depravity had been hidden from him lest it cause him despair He realized that he was forgiven for sins from the beginning of time, when he had conceived in his own heart the sin of Adam, until the present, when he had denied poor Nelson He saw that no sin was too monstrous for him to claim as his own, and since God loved in proportion as He forgave, he felt ready at that instant to enter Paradise

Nelson, composing his expression under the shadow of his hat brim, watched him with a mixture of fatigue and suspicion, but as the train

glided past them and disappeared like a frightened serpent into the woods, even his face lightened and he muttered, "I'm glad I've went once, but I'll never go back again!"

### COMMENT

In order to see how pervasive irony may be, it will be useful at the outset to summarize the main themes of our story. It is, first of all, an account of the difficulty of all human relations, here between "father" and "son" and between the white man and the Negro. It also develops the theme of the passage from innocence to knowledge, which takes on a particular form for Nelson, that of the initiation of a young boy into adult life. The story does not conclude with Mr. Head's knowledge of himself, of his own depravity, but carries with it the promise of redemption. Indeed, there is much evidence to indicate that Miss O'Connor is writing a muted allegory of the fall and the redemption of man.

The central irony of this story is revealed through its plot. It is equally true to say that the irony shapes the main lines of the plot, which develops the fall of the proud, excessively confident Mr. Head. He is a man who, in the beginning, is very sure of himself, who believes that "age was a choice blessing and that only with years does a man enter into that understanding of life that makes him a suitable guide for the young", and he is confident that he can "carry out the moral mission of the coming day." But, in the course of events, Mr. Head learns how profoundly unsuitable a guide he is, not only geographically, but also morally and spiritually. This is irony of event or structure, things turn out differently from what Mr. Head expected.

The plot develops along the lines of what is called dramatic or tragic irony. We may illustrate what we mean by again referring to Greek tragedy, which provides us with the most famous example. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* we witness the terrifying irony in the situation of a man who learns that he is the murderer he has been seeking. Similarly, Mr. Head learns that he, who considered himself moral and upright, is actually a man whose "true depravity had been hidden from him lest it cause him despair." Now, it has often been pointed out that one distinction between modern and earlier tragedy is in the magnitude of the hero (some have, in fact, argued that there can be no proper tragedy without an imposing figure like a king or a prince). Yet, ordinary people may take on magnitude at times—at least, this is Miss O'Connor's belief, as we see, for example, in the description of Mr. Head's clothes, which had "an almost noble air, like the garment of some great man," and at the end, in his intense, apocalyptic vision. It is his *conscious* confrontation of his fate which makes Mr. Head a proper, and, indeed, a considerable, tragic figure. We must add, nevertheless, that his tragedy is only potential, we shall see that it is in actuality converted into a special kind of comedy.

Mr. Head's denial of Nelson leads to his recognition of his moral depravity and his consequent spiritual forlornness, this is the first reversal in the story, its first profound irony. "He felt he knew now what time would be like without seasons and what heat would be like without light and what

man would be like without salvation " This is a vision of hell However, Miss O'Connor does not stop with Mr Head's fall, she is also concerned with his salvation And it was here that Miss O'Connor faced perhaps her most difficult problem What would be an experience altogether realistic yet powerful enough to convince the reader that Mr Head had experienced salvation? What epiphany (see "Reading the Short Story," page 3), what revelation? For Mr Head, a Southerner, she chose the most ironic means of salvation possible—a Negro And not a real Negro With marvelously comic irony, she confronted Mr Head and Nelson with a Negro boy hitching-post, which to them is "some great mystery, some monument to another's victory that brought them together in their common defeat " Ironies abound here First, in the fact that a Negro should have a statue erected to him, as they naively believe—thus "their common defeat " (That the statue is cracked and that it is a symbol of social oppression are two counter ironies which escape them ) Then, their defeat humbles them and draws them together Pride separated them, humility unites them Their differences are dissolved "like an action of mercy " And so Mr Head comes to understand that mercy grows "out of agony, which is not denied to any man and which is given in strange ways to children", it grows in particular out of the agony of children like Nelson and the artificial Negro, who represents all Negroes Just as the crucified Christ forgave mankind, so the "crucified" Negro—an analogue of Christ—for-gives the white man The plot, which up to this point has been developing along the lines of classical tragic irony, has now taken another ironic turn, which we may call that of the Christian paradox The paradox we have in mind is that enunciated by St Paul, that you must lose your life in order to find it, that you must die to be reborn This is what Mr Head has undergone Now, back home, "He saw that no sin was too monstrous for him to claim for his own, and since God loved in proportion as He forgave, he felt ready at that instant to enter Paradise " Mr Head's tragedy becomes, in Dante's sense, a divine comedy—not, of course, on Dante's grand scale, but subdued, muted, thus characteristically modern He first suffered the irony of his tragic fall, he now is blessed with the irony of his resurrection and redemption This double ironic reversal is the pattern which stories of fall and redemption take (as the reader will see again in "Gimpel the Fool")

It is important to distinguish between a crude and a profound sense of irony The irony of a man's fall and redemption can be found in the cheapest fiction or movies It is the commonplace of every Sunday pulpit What distinguishes Miss O'Connor's handling of irony is her complicated, profound sense of it, realized through her wit, her humor, and her fresh imagining of familiar matter, the relation between the white man and the Negro From this point of view, her subject is not so much what happens to Mr Head and Nelson as what happens to them in their relation to the Negro As we have seen, it is in this relation that the ironies of our story realize their full complexity, not the least of which is that the oppressed is the means of redeeming the oppressor

Miss O'Connor's sense of irony is given its severest test in her handling



of this relationship. We are aware of how easily we may lapse into a sentimental attitude on this subject, as do some daily Northern newspapers and popular magazines, in which melodramas of white evil and black virtue regularly appear. But has Miss O'Connor lapsed into this popular sentimentalism? We might consider, first, the fact that the fat, sad Negro on the train is prosperous, and thus is at least not oppressed materially, second, that his upper-class bearing indicates that he practices his own kind of discrimination. We should also recall that the Negro waiter is rather proud and haughty, just as is Mr. Head. We begin to see that Miss O'Connor's total conception of the Negro is qualified, shaded with ironies, as is further shown by the superiority of the prostitute, the easy way she manages Nelson. The prostitute is undoubtedly oppressed in a general, social sense, but as a particular person she gives every evidence of well-being. And Miss O'Connor avoids the misleading simplifications of the popular, melodramatic version of our greatest national (not only Southern) problem in her view of the white man, too. Although Mr. Head is guilty of the usual faults (he would keep the Negro in his place and boasts about having run one out of the county), he is nonetheless a man of good will, bent on giving moral and spiritual instruction. This subtle defining of the relation between the Negro and the white man suggests one distinction between "pure" art and propaganda art. In the latter, people and events are represented in unqualified terms, without the ironies that make up a real situation. What, then, is Miss O'Connor saying about the relationship? She indicts the white man, but makes demands of the Negro too. The white man must humble himself and admit his sin, but the Negro must learn to forgive him—perhaps a harder thing. This is mercy, the ironic force which resolves the two principal conflicts, that between Mr. Head and Nelson, and between them and the Negro.

## QUESTIONS ON IRONY

1 Humor is a form of irony. Thus, the fat, bald-headed suburbanite wearing golf knickers, grotesquely humorous in the context of Mr. Head's despair, functions ironically as a momentary savior when he directs Mr. Head to the station. What other instances of humorous irony are there?

2 How does Miss O'Connor keep the humility of Mr. Head and Nelson unsentimental? Note Mr. Head's explanation of the statue.

3 "The Artificial Nigger" and "Grace" both have grace as their subject. Irony is a central force in both, but with what different attitudes and consequences?

4 Work out the ironic structure of Nelson's experience of initiation.

5 Keeping in mind that the ironic structure reveals meaning, work out the ironic structure of "Gusev," "Red Leaves," and "Death in Venice."

## Other Considerations

1 There is considerable evidence pointing to the conclusion that this story is in part allegorical. (We say "in part," since in a pure allegory

there is a specific idea or event behind every object or action. For example, in *Pilgrim's Progress* the Slough of Despond corresponds exactly to the hero's own spiritual despondency.) One theme we noted was the fall and redemption of man. With this in mind, we may take the analogy at the end between Mr. Head and Adam to be allegorical. In this way his name makes sense: he is Adam, the *head* man, the first man, not merely Nelson's grandfather, but the *grandfather* of us all. How does Miss O'Connor give body to this allegory of Adam? Consider the allusions to the Garden of Eden at the end, notice the image of the departing train. Consider, too, the changes in the moon from the opening to the close. We must caution the reader, however, that the success of the story is dependent not on this muted allegory—although it does give the story added density—but on the dramatic, natural surface.

2 Although Miss O'Connor's style is rich in imagery, its syntax is simple, its diction plain, and its tone flat. But notice the change in the next-to-last paragraph. Is this simply fancy, elegant writing? Why the change? Is it dramatically effective? The reader might also consider the effect of such changes in style at the conclusions of "Grace" and "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," as well as everywhere in "Death in Venice."

3 The same paragraph provides an example of an idea functioning as one element in the total meaning. Is it merely tacked on as a kind of preachy moral, or is it dramatized?

4 The reader might compare Miss O'Connor's treatment of the Negro with Miss Welty's in "Powerhouse."

# Gimpel the Fool

*Isaac Bashevis Singer*

## I

I am Gimpel the Fool I don't think myself a fool On the contrary But that's what folks call me They gave me the name while I was still in school I had seven names in all imbecile, donkey, flax-head, dope, glump, ninny, and fool The last name stuck What did my foolishness consist of? I was easy to take in They said, "Gimpel, you know the rabbi's wife has been brought to childbed?" So I skipped school Well, it turned out to be a lie How was I supposed to know? She hadn't had a big belly But I never looked at her belly Was that really so foolish? The gang laughed and hee-hawed, stomped and danced and chanted a good-night prayer And instead of the raisins they give when a woman's lying in, they stuffed my hand full of goat turds I was no weakling If I slapped someone he'd see all the way to Cracow But I'm really not a slugger by nature I think to myself Let it pass So they take advantage of me

I was coming home from school and heard a dog barking I'm not afraid of dogs, but of course I never want to start up with them One of them may be mad, and if he bites there's not a Tartar in the world who can help you So I made tracks Then I looked around and saw the whole market place wild with laughter It was no dog at all but Wolf-Leib the Thief How was I supposed to know it was he? It sounded like a howling bitch

When the pranksters and leg-pullers found that I was easy to fool, every one of them tried his luck with me "Gimpel, the Czar is coming to Frampol, Gimpel, the moon fell down in Turbeen, Gimpel, little Hodel Furpiece found a treasure behind the bathhouse" And I like a golem believed everyone In the first place, everything is possible, as it is written in the Wisdom of the Fathers, I've forgotten just how Second, I had to believe when the whole town came down on me! If I ever dared to say, "Ah, you're kidding!" there was trouble People got angry "What do you mean! You want to call everyone a liar?" What was I to do? I believed them, and I hope at least that did them some good

*From A TREASURY OF YIDDISH STORIES edited by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg Copyright 1953 1954 by The Viking Press Inc Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press Inc New York*

I was an orphan My grandfather who brought me up was already bent toward the grave So they turned me over to a baker, and what a time they gave me there! Every woman or girl who came to bake a batch of noodles had to fool me at least once 'Gimpel, there's a fair in heaven, Gimpel, the rabbi gave birth to a calf in the seventh month, Gimpel, a cow flew over the roof and laid brass eggs" A student from the yeshiva came once to buy a roll, and he said, 'You, Gimpel, while you stand here scraping with your baker's shovel the Messiah has come The dead have arisen" "What do you mean? I said "I heard no one blowing the ram's horn!" He said, "Are you deaf?" And all began to cry, "We heard it, we heard!" Then in came Rietze the Candle-dipper and called out in her hoarse voice, "Gimpel, your father and mother have stood up from the grave They're looking for you"

To tell the truth, I knew very well that nothing of the sort had happened, but all the same, as folks were talking, I threw on my wool vest and went out Maybe something had happened What did I stand to lose by looking? Well, what a cat music went up! And then I took a vow to believe nothing more But that was no go either They confused me so that I didn't know the big end from the small

I went to the rabbi to get some advice He said, "It is written, better to be a fool all your days than for one hour to be evil You are not a fool They are the fools For he who causes his neighbor to feel shame loses Paradise himself" Nevertheless the rabbi's daughter took me in As I left the rabbinical court she said "Have you kissed the wall yet?" I said, "No, what for?" She answered, "It's the law, you've got to do it after every visit" Well, there didn't seem to be any harm in it And she burst out laughing It was a fine trick She put one over on me, all right

I wanted to go off to another town, but then everyone got busy match-making, and they were after me so they nearly tore my coat tails off They talked at me and talked until I got water on the ear She was no chaste maiden, but they told me she was virgin pure She had a limp, and they said it was deliberate, from coyness She had a bastard, and they told me the child was her little brother I cried, "You're wasting your time I'll never marry that whore" But they said indignantly, "What a way to talk! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? We can take you to the rabbi and have you fined for giving her a bad name" I saw then that I wouldn't escape them so easily and I thought They're set on making me their butt But when you're married the husband's the master, and if that's all right with her it's agreeable to me too Besides, you can't pass through life unscathed, nor expect to

I went to her clay house, which was built on the sand, and the whole gang, hollering and chorusing, came after me They acted like bear-baiters When we came to the well they stopped all the same They were afraid to start anything with Elka Her mouth would open as if it

were on a hinge, and she had a fierce tongue I entered the house Lin were strung from wall to wall and clothes were drying Barefoot stood by the tub, doing the wash She was dressed in a worn hand-me-down gown of plush She had her hair put up in braids and pinned across her head It took my breath away, almost, the reek of it all

Evidently she knew who I was She took a look at me and said "Look who's here! He's come, the drip Grab a seat "

I told her all, I denied nothing "Tell me the truth," I said, "are you really a virgin, and is that mischievous Yechiel actually your little brother? Don't be deceitful with me, for I'm an orphan "

"I'm an orphan myself," she answered, "and whoever tries to twist you up, may the end of his nose take a twist But don't let them threaten they can take advantage of me I want a dowry of fifty guilders, and let them take up a collection besides Otherwise they can kiss my you-know-what " She was very plainspoken I said, "It's the bride and not the groom who gives a dowry " Then she said, "Don't bargain with me Either a flat 'yes' or a flat 'no'—Go back where you came from "

I thought No bread will ever be baked from *this* dough But ours was not a poor town They consented to everything and proceeded with the wedding It so happened that there was a dysentery epidemic at the time The ceremony was held at the cemetery gates, near the little corpse-washing hut The fellows got drunk While the marriage contract was being drawn up I heard the most pious high rabbi ask, "Is the bride a widow or a divorced woman?" And the sexton's wife answered for her, "Both a widow and divorced " It was a black moment for me But what was I to do, run away from under the marriage canopy?

There was singing and dancing An old granny danced opposite me hugging a braided white *chala* The master of revels made a "God of mercy" in memory of the bride's parents The schoolboys threw burlesques on Tishe b'Av fast day There were a lot of gifts after the sermon a noodle board, a kneading trough, a bucket, brooms, ladles, household articles galore Then I took a look and saw two strapping young men carrying a crib "What do we need this for?" I asked So they said "Don't rack your brains about it It's all right, it'll come in handy " I realized I was going to be rooked Take it another way though, what did I stand to lose? I reflected I'll see what comes of it A whole town can't go altogether crazy

At night I came where my wife lay, but she wouldn't let me in "See how I look here, is this what they married us for?" I said And she said, "No, the monthly has come " "But yesterday they took you to the ritual bath and that's afterward, isn't it supposed to be?" "Today isn't yesterday," said she, "and yesterday's not today You can beat it if you don't like it " In short, I waited

Not four months later she was in childbed The townsfolk hid the

laughter with their knuckles But what could I do? She suffered intolerable pains and clawed at the walls 'Gimpel,' she cried, "I'm going Forgive me!" The house filled with women They were boiling pans of water The screams rose to the welkin

The thing to do was to go to the House of Prayer to repeat Psalms, and that was what I did

The townsfolk liked that, all right I stood in a corner saying Psalms and prayers, and they shook their heads at me "Pray, pray!" they told me 'Prayer never made any woman pregnant' One of the congregation put a straw to my mouth and said, "Hay for the cows" There was something to that too, by God!

She gave birth to a boy Friday at the synagogue the sexton stood up before the Ark, pounded on the reading table, and announced, "The wealthy Reb Gimpel invites the congregation to a feast in honor of the birth of a son" The whole House of Prayer rang with laughter My face was flaming But there was nothing I could do After all, I *was* the one responsible for the circumcision honors and rituals

Half the town came running You couldn't wedge another soul in Women brought peppered chick-peas, and there was a keg of beer from the tavern I ate and drank as much as anyone, and they all congratulated me Then there was a circumcision, and I named the boy after my father, may he rest in peace When all were gone and I was left with my wife alone, she thrust her head through the bed-curtain and called me to her

"Gimpel," said she, "why are you silent? Has your ship gone and sunk?"

"What shall I say?" I answered "A fine thing you've done to me! If my mother had known of it she'd have died a second time"

She said, "Are you crazy, or what?"

"How can you make such a fool," I said, "of one who should be the lord and master?"

"What's the matter with you?" she said "What have you taken into your head to imagine?"

I saw that I must speak bluntly and openly "Do you think this is the way to use an orphan?" I said "You have borne a bastard"

She answered, 'Drive this foolishness out of your head The child is yours'

"How can he be mine?" I argued "He was born seventeen weeks after the wedding"

She told me then that he was premature I said, "Isn't he a little too premature?" She said, she had had a grandmother who carried just as short a time and she resembled this grandmother of hers as one drop of water does another She swore to it with such oaths that you would have believed a peasant at the fair if he had used them To tell the plain

truth, I didn't believe her, but when I talked it over next day with the schoolmaster he told me the very same thing had happened to Adam and Eve Two they went up to bed, and four they descended

"There isn't a woman in the world who is not the granddaughter of Eve," he said

That was how it was, they argued me dumb But then, who really knows how such things are?

I began to forget my sorrow I loved the child madly, and he loved me too As soon as he saw me he'd wave his little hands and want me to pick him up, and when he was colicky I was the only one who could pacify him I bought him a little bone teething ring and a little gilded cap He was forever catching the evil eye from someone, and then I had to run to get one of those abracadabras for him that would get him out of it I worked like an ox You know how expenses go up when there's an infant in the house I don't want to lie about it, I didn't dislike Elka either, for that matter She swore at me and cursed, and I couldn't get enough of her What strength she had! One of her looks could rob you of the power of speech And her orations! Pitch and sulphur, that's what they were full of, and yet somehow also full of charm I adored her every word She gave me bloody wounds though

In the evening I brought her a white loaf as well as a dark one, and also poppyseed rolls I baked myself I thieved because of her and swiped everything I could lay hands on macaroons, raisins, almonds, cakes I hope I may be forgiven for stealing from the Saturday pots the women left to warm in the baker's oven I would take out scraps of meat, a chunk of pudding, a chicken leg or head, a piece of tripe, whatever I could nip quickly She ate and became fat and handsome

I had to sleep away from home all during the week, at the bakery On Friday nights when I got home she always made an excuse of some sort Either she had heartburn, or a stitch in the side, or hiccups, or headaches You know what women's excuses are I had a bitter time of it It was rough To add to it, this little brother of hers, the bastard, was growing bigger He'd put lumps on me, and when I wanted to hit back she'd open her mouth and curse so powerfully I saw a green haze floating before my eyes Ten times a day she threatened to divorce me Another man in my place would have taken French leave and disappeared But I'm the type that bears it and says nothing What's one to do? Shoulders are from God, and burdens too

One night there was a calamity in the bakery, the oven burst, and we almost had a fire There was nothing to do but go home, so I went home Let me, I thought, also taste the joy of sleeping in bed in mid-week I didn't want to wake the sleeping mite and tiptoed into the house Coming in, it seemed to me that I heard not the snoring of one but, as it were, a double snore, one a thin enough snore and the other

like the snoring of a slaughtered ox Oh, I didn't like that! I didn't like it at all I went up to the bed, and things suddenly turned black Next to Elka lay a man's form Another in my place would have made an uproar, and enough noise to rouse the whole town, but the thought occurred to me that I might wake the child A little thing like that—why frighten a little swallow, I thought All right then, I went back to the bakery and stretched out on a sack of flour and till morning I never shut an eye I shivered as if I had had malaria "Enough of being a donkey," I said to myself "Gimpel isn't going to be a sucker all his life There's a limit even to the foolishness of a fool like Gimpel"

In the morning I went to the rabbi to get advice, and it made a great commotion in the town They sent the beadle for Elka right away She came, carrying the child And what do you think she did? She denied it, denied everything, bone and stone! "He's out of his head," she said "I know nothing of dreams or divinations" They yelled at her, warned her, hammered on the table, but she stuck to her guns it was a false accusation, she said

The butchers and the horse-traders took her part One of the lads from the slaughterhouse came by and said to me, "We've got our eye on you, you're a marked man" Meanwhile the child started to bear down and soiled itself In the rabbinical court there was an Ark of the Covenant, and they couldn't allow that, so they sent Elka away

I said to the rabbi, "What shall I do?"

"You must divorce her at once," said he

"And what if she refuses?" I asked

He said, "You must serve the divorce That's all you'll have to do"

I said, "Well, all right, Rabbi Let me think about it"

"There's nothing to think about," said he "You mustn't remain under the same roof with her"

"And if I want to see the child?" I asked

"Let her go, the harlot," said he, "and her brood of bastards with her"

The verdict he gave was that I mustn't even cross her threshold—never again, as long as I should live

During the day it didn't bother me so much I thought It was bound to happen, the abscess had to burst But at night when I stretched out upon the sacks I felt it all very bitterly A longing took me, for her and for the child I wanted to be angry, but that's my misfortune exactly, I don't have it in me to be really angry In the first place—this was how my thoughts went—there's bound to be a slip sometimes You can't live without errors Probably that lad who was with her led her on and gave her presents and what not, and women are often long on hair and short on sense, and so he got around her And then since she denies it so, maybe I was only seeing things? Hallucinations do happen You see a figure or a mannikin or something, but when you come up closer it's nothing,



there's not a thing there And if that's so, I'm doing her an injustice And when I got so far in my thoughts I started to weep I sobbed so that I wet the flour where I lay In the morning I went to the rabbi and told him that I had made a mistake The rabbi wrote on with his quill, and he said that if that were so he would have to reconsider the whole case Until he had finished I wasn't to go near my wife, but I might send her bread and money by messenger

### III

Nine months passed before all the rabbis could come to an agreement Letters went back and forth I hadn't realized that there could be so much erudition about a matter like this

Meanwhile Elka gave birth to still another child, a girl this time On the Sabbath I went to the synagogue and invoked a blessing on her They called me up to the Torah, and I named the child for my mother-in-law—may she rest in peace The louts and loudmouths of the town who came into the bakery gave me a going over All Frampol refreshed its spirits because of my trouble and grief However, I resolved that I would always believe what I was told What's the good of *not* believing? Today it's your wife you don't believe, tomorrow it's God Himself you won't take stock in

By an apprentice who was her neighbor I sent her daily a corn or a wheat loaf, or a piece of pastry, rolls or bagels, or, when I got the chance, a slab of pudding, a slice of honeycake, or wedding strudel—whatever came my way The apprentice was a goodhearted lad, and more than once he added something on his own He had formerly annoyed me a lot, plucking my nose and digging me in the ribs, but when he started to be a visitor to my house he became kind and friendly "Hey, you, Gimpel," he said to me, "you have a very decent little wife and two fine kids You don't deserve them "

"But the things people say about her," I said

"Well, they have long tongues," he said, "and nothing to do with them but babble Ignore it as you ignore the cold of last winter "

One day the rabbi sent for me and said, "Are you certain, Gimpel, that you were wrong about your wife?"

I said, "I'm certain "

'Why, but look here! You yourself saw it "

"It must have been a shadow," I said

"The shadow of what?"

"Just of one of the beams, I think "

"You can go home then You owe thanks to the Yanover rabbi He found an obscure reference in Maimonides that favored you "

I seized the rabbi's hand and kissed it

I wanted to run home immediately It's no small thing to be separated

for so long a time from wife and child Then I reflected I'd better go back to work now, and go home in the evening I said nothing to anyone, although as far as my heart was concerned it was like one of the Holy Days The women teased and twitted me as they did every day, but my thought was Go on, with your loose talk The truth is out, like the oil upon the water Maimonides says it's right, and therefore it is right!

At night, when I had covered the dough to let it rise, I took my share of bread and a little sack of flour and started homeward The moon was full and the stars were glistening, something to terrify the soul I hurried onward, and before me darted a long shadow It was winter, and a fresh snow had fallen I had a mind to sing, but it was growing late and I didn't want to wake the householders Then I felt like whistling, but I remembered that you don't whistle at night because it brings the demons out So I was silent and walked as fast as I could

Dogs in the Christian yards barked at me when I passed, but I thought Bark your teeth out! What are you but mere dogs? Whereas I am a man, the husband of a fine wife, the father of promising children

As I approached the house my heart started to pound as though it were the heart of a criminal I felt no fear, but my heart went thump! thump! Well, no drawing back I quietly lifted the latch and went in Elka was asleep I looked at the infant's cradle The shutter was closed, but the moon forced its way through the cracks I saw the newborn child's face and loved it as soon as I saw it—immediately—each tiny bone

Then I came nearer to the bed And what did I see but the apprentice lying there beside Elka The moon went out all at once It was utterly black, and I trembled My teeth chattered The bread fell from my hands, and my wife waked and said, "Who is that, ah?"

I muttered, "It's me"

"Gimpel?" she asked "How come you're here? I thought it was forbidden"

"The rabbi said," I answered and shook as with a fever

"Listen to me, Gimpel," she said, "go out to the shed and see if the goat's all right It seems she's been sick" I have forgotten to say that we had a goat When I heard she was unwell I went into the yard The nanny-goat was a good little creature I had a nearly human feeling for her

With hesitant steps I went up to the shed and opened the door The goat stood there on her four feet I felt her everywhere, drew her by the horns, examined her udders, and found nothing wrong She had probably eaten too much bark "Good night, little goat," I said "Keep well" And the little beast answered with a "Maa" as though to thank me for the good will

I went back The apprentice had vanished

"Where," I asked, "is the lad?"

"What lad?" my wife answered

"What do you mean?" I said "The apprentice You were sleeping with him "

"The things I have dreamed this night and the night before," she said, "may they come true and lay you low, body and soul! An evil spirit has taken root in you and dazzles your sight " She screamed out, "You hateful creature! You moon calf! You spook! You uncouth man! Get out, or I'll scream all Frampol out of bed!"

Before I could move, her brother sprang out from behind the oven and struck me a blow on the back of the head I thought he had broken my neck I felt that something about me was deeply wrong, and I said, "Don't make a scandal All that's needed now is that people should accuse me of raising spooks and *dybbuks* " For that was what she had meant "No one will touch bread of my baking "

In short, I somehow calmed her

"Well," she said, "that's enough Lie down, and be shattered by wheels "

Next morning I called the apprentice aside 'Listen here, brother!" I said And so on and so forth "What do you say?" He stared at me as though I had dropped from the roof or something

"I swear," he said, "you'd better go to an herb doctor or some healer I'm afraid you have a screw loose, but I'll hush it up for you " And that's how the thing stood

To make a long story short, I lived twenty years with my wife She bore me six children, four daughters and two sons All kinds of things happened, but I neither saw nor heard I believed, and that's all The rabbi recently said to me, "Belief in itself is beneficial It is written that a good man lives by his faith "

Suddenly my wife took sick It began with a trifle, a little growth upon the breast But she evidently was not destined to live long, she had no years I spent a fortune on her I have forgotten to say that by this time I had a bakery of my own and in Frampol was considered to be something of a rich man Daily the healer came, and every witch doctor in the neighborhood was brought They decided to use leeches, and after that to try cupping They even called a doctor from Lublin, but it was too late Before she died she called me to her bed and said, "Forgive me, Gimpel "

I said, "What is there to forgive? You have been a good and faithful wife "

"Woe, Gimpel!" she said "It was ugly how I deceived you all these years I want to go clean to my Maker, and so I have to tell you that the children are not yours "

If I had been clouted on the head with a piece of wood it couldn't have bewildered me more

"Whose are they?" I asked

"I don't know," she said "There were a lot but they're not yours " And as she spoke she tossed her head to the side, her eyes turned glassy,

and it was all up with Elka. On her whitened lips there remained a smile. I imagined that, dead as she was, she was saying, "I deceived Gimpel. That was the meaning of my brief life."

## IV

One night, when the period of mourning was done, as I lay dreaming on the flour sacks, there came the Spirit of Evil himself and said to me, "Gimpel, why do you sleep?"

I said, "What should I be doing? Eating *kreplach*?"

"The whole world deceives you," he said, "and you ought to deceive the world in your turn."

"How can I deceive all the world?" I asked him.

He answered, "You might accumulate a bucket of urine every day and at night pour it into the dough. Let the sages of Frampol eat filth."

"What about the judgment in the world to come?" I said.

"There is no world to come," he said. "They've sold you a bill of goods and talked you into believing you carried a cat in your belly. What nonsense!"

"Well then," I said, "and is there a God?"

He answered, "There is no God either."

"What," I said, "is there, then?"

"A thick mire."

He stood before my eyes with a goatish beard and horn, long-toothed, and with a tail. Hearing such words, I wanted to snatch him by the tail, but I tumbled from the flour sacks and nearly broke a rib. Then it happened that I had to answer the call of nature, and, passing, I saw the risen dough, which seemed to say to me, "Do it!" In brief, I let myself be persuaded.

At dawn the apprentice came. We kneaded the bread, scattered caraway seeds on it, and set it to bake. Then the apprentice went away, and I was left sitting in the little trench by the oven, on a pile of rags. Well, Gimpel, I thought, you've revenged yourself on them for all the shame they've put on you. Outside the frost glittered, but it was warm beside the oven. The flames heated my face. I bent my head and fell into a doze.

I saw in a dream, at once, Elka in her shroud. She called to me, "What have you done, Gimpel?"

I said to her, "It's all your fault," and started to cry.

"You fool!" she said. "You fool! Because I was false is everything false too? I never deceived anyone but myself. I'm paying for it all, Gimpel. They spare you nothing here."

I looked at her face. It was black, I was startled and waked, and remained sitting dumb. I sensed that everything hung in the balance. A false step now and I'd lose Eternal Life. But God gave me His help. I seized

the long shovel and took out the loaves, carried them into the yard, and started to dig a hole in the frozen earth

My apprentice came back as I was doing it "What are you doing, boss?" he said, and grew pale as a corpse

"I know what I'm doing," I said, and I buried it all before his very eyes

Then I went home, took my hoard from its hiding place, and divided it among the children "I saw your mother tonight," I said "She's turning black, poor thing"

They were so astounded they couldn't speak a word

"Be well," I said, "and forget that such a one as Gimpel ever existed" I put on my short coat, a pair of boots, took the bag that held my prayer shawl in one hand, my stock in the other, and kissed the *mezzuzah* When people saw me in the street they were greatly surprised

"Where are you going?" they said

I answered, "Into the world" And so I departed from Frampol

I wandered over the land, and good people did not neglect me After many years I became old and white, I heard a great deal, many lies and falsehoods, but the longer I lived the more I understood that there were really no lies Whatever doesn't really happen is dreamed at night It happens to one if it doesn't happen to another, tomorrow if not today, or a century hence if not next year What difference can it make? Often I heard tales of which I said, "Now this is a thing that cannot happen" But before a year had elapsed I heard that it actually had come to pass somewhere

Going from place to place, eating at strange tables, it often happens that I spin yarns—improbable things that could never have happened—about devils, magicians, windmills, and the like The children run after me, calling, "Grandfather, tell us a story" Sometimes they ask for particular stories, and I try to please them A fat young boy once said to me, "Grandfather, it's the same story you told us before" The little rogue, he was right

So it is with dreams too It is many years since I left Frampol, but as soon as I shut my eyes I am there again And whom do you think I see? Elka She is standing by the washtub, as at our first encounter, but her face is shining and her eyes are as radiant as the eyes of a saint, and she speaks outlandish words to me, strange things When I wake I have forgotten it all But while the dream lasts I am comforted She answers all my queries, and what comes out is that all is right I weep and implore, "Let me be with you" And she consoles me and tells me to be patient The time is nearer than it is far Sometimes she strokes and kisses me and weeps upon my face When I awaken I feel her lips and taste the salt of her tears

No doubt the world is entirely an imaginary world, but it is only once

removed from the true world At the door of the hovel where I lie, there stands the plank on which the dead are taken away The gravedigger Jew has his spade ready The grave waits and the worms are hungry, the shrouds are prepared—I carry them in my beggar's sack Another *schnorrer* is waiting to inherit my bed of straw When the time comes I will go joyfully Whatever may be there, it will be real, without complication, without ridicule, without deception God be praised there even Gimpel cannot be deceived

### *Words and Expressions in 'Gimpel the Fool'*

*chala* The Sabbath bread

*dybbuk* A condemned soul which to escape the torments of evil spirits, often sought refuge in the body of a pious person

*kreplach* A small patty of dough filled with chopped meat

*mezzuzah* A small parchment inscribed with passages from Deut VI 4 9 and XI 13 21, inserted in a case and nailed in a slanting position to the right hand doorpost as a talisman against evil

*schnorrer* A shameless beggar used affectionately here

### COMMENT

"Gimpel The Fool" seems to be merely a simple, amusing story of a good-natured fool It moves along wittily, briskly, and unpretentiously, and these qualities make it at least a genuine pleasure—many modern stories labor so in delivering their subjects Still, if 'Gimpel' were only an amusing tale, it would have no further interest for us

The story gets its weight, so to speak, from two distinct ironic attitudes, toward the villagers and toward Gimpel What is Singer's attitude toward his hero? He is certainly sympathetic, yet since Gimpel is foolish from a common-sense view, we need to qualify Singer's attitude by describing it as a mixture of sympathy and irony, a kind of fond irony

This attitude is in contrast to that of the villagers, who regard Gimpel only as a fool—as he certainly is, seen from their common-sense point of view But this view is inadequate, for what is folly to them is faith to Gimpel, as is clear when he concludes that if you do not believe others, then tomorrow it's God himself you won't take stock in Life as an act of faith is set against the villagers' view of life as an act of reason, of common sense

But can we say that, despite Singer's ironic attitude, the story is nonetheless a sentimental account of the virtue of simplicity in its form of folly? It might have been if it were a matter between the villagers and Gimpel only But there is Elka, too Gimpel learns of her faithlessness, and with this complication his simplicity is put to its first serious test And it proves to be inadequate to protect him from the temptations of the Devil The story at this point, far from being sentimental, reveals the weakness of simplicity in the everyday world Gimpel is saved by Elka, a

woman of practical experience, calling from the grave where she has both suffered for her betrayal of Gimpel and been transformed. Her faith renews his, with God's "help." His aim now is to become not less simple, but more so. He turns to *absolute* simplicity by ridding himself of his earthly hoard—the fact that he was successful in business is one of several indications that he was not absolutely simple before. He wanders from town to town, telling improbable stories about devils, magicians and the like. The improbable—folly raised to the supernatural—is now his only serious preoccupation. Thus, Gimpel both denies his old faith in folly and reaffirms it on a bolder, indeed, a saintly basis: *only* foolish things are worth talking about.

Singer's story is in the tradition which has it that idiots and fools are touched with holiness. Turgenev once described a character as "foolish to the point of holy innocence," and many readers are familiar with Dostoyevsky's holy idiot, Prince Myshkin. Understood in this tradition, at the end Gimpel is both fool and saint, in this paradox lies Singer's final attitude. Singer is ironic toward both the limited view of the villagers and the "unlimited" view of Gimpel. But, while his irony is critical toward the villagers, in the form of paradox it is a means of seeing Gimpel as a saint. Thus, while irony is often "destructive," it can also make possible a constructive, transcendent view, here that pure folly is saintliness.

## QUESTIONS ON IRONY

1 What is the connection between irony of attitude and irony of structure in this story?

2 We noted that "Gimpel" might be read as a sentimental tale in which the oppressed fool turns out to have all the moral virtues as well as a saintly wisdom. What other factors, besides those noted, keep the story from "going soft"?

3 "Gimpel" and "The Artificial Nigger" have in common at least one theme, that of the fall and redemption of a man. Is there a similarity in their structural ironies?

4 Trace the ironic development of Elka's life (which would include Gimpel's vision of her after death). How does it compare with Gimpel's development?

5 Cite instances of humor as a form of irony—for example, when Gimpel runs to see if his parents have been resurrected.

6 Consider the function of the ironic attitude in "Grace," "Dawn," and "Madame Tellier's Excursion."

## Other Considerations

1 Stories often end with affirmations, but their joyless substance makes us sometimes wonder if the affirmation was more willed than felt, more a conventional gesture than a natural upwelling. What is the case in "Gimpel"? What evidence do you have to support your conclusion?

2 One of "Gimpel's" merits is its gaiety. Are we to say, then, that it is

not serious? To put it more generally, are wit and seriousness mutually exclusive? Consider, for example, "The Artificial Nigger," "Red Leaves," and "How It Was Done in Odessa." The reader might also profitably consider Shakespeare's tragedies.

3 We have often stressed the point that to know the meaning of a story abstractly is inadequate, that a full sense of the meaning requires a grasp of how the meanings are presented. "The Artificial Nigger" and "Gimpel" have some themes in common, and yet they differ vastly because of the way they are presented. What are some factors that distinguish these different treatments of the same theme? Consider, for example, style (in the narrow sense of language), setting, and imagery, also, Miss O'Connor's apparent allegorical intention.

4 What would be lost if the story were told in the third person rather than the first?

5 If, prior to Gimpel's fall, he were presented as being altogether gullible, he would probably be an implausible character. How does Singer make him plausible in the first part of the story?

6 Singer's method is more narrative than scenic (see "Reading the Short Story," page 5). Is "Gimpel" therefore less effective than the primarily scenic stories of Babel and Chekhov? What is gained and what is lost with each method? The reader might later consider further stories in the light of these two methods.



# Symbolism

A symbol is usually defined as that which stands for something else. A distinction should be made, however, between a mathematical symbol, standing for an exact quantity, and a literary symbol, standing for intangible qualities (moral, sensuous, and so forth) and carrying with it seemingly endless meanings.

Symbols may also be understood as either public or private. Public symbols are familiar, of various sorts: national (the flag), religious (the cross), social (the vine-covered cottage), natural (the ocean), and so forth. But readers may have difficulty with private symbols, springing from the writer's imagination. This kind becomes clear through the meaning of the story "Red Leaves," for example, is about (among other things) the encroachment of the modern mechanized world on nature, or, more generally, the relation of the past to the present, thus, the steamboat and the Parisian slippers symbolize, comically, the decadent effect of civilization on the natural man. Symbols can be ambiguous, here they also stand for Mockett's power.

The impulse to symbolize is inherent, satisfying our need to give meanings to things and events. Found a nation or start a fraternity, and at once you feel the need for a symbol of it, a flag or an emblem to stand for everything that went into its making. These things serve to evoke the intense feelings that nation or fraternity imply. As its root meaning, "a throwing together," indicates, the symbol is a concentration, one of felt meanings. Like the concentration of energy in the atom, that of meaning in the symbol is power, too. So it is that the symbol sometimes calls forth a deeper response than does what it stands for—think of our response not only to the flag but also to the photograph album or bundle of old letters. Thus, apart from all that it represents, the symbol rides on its own power—the artificial Negro in the O'Connor story and the transfigured sky in "Gusev" draw us for their own sakes. Perhaps this is so because they speak to us in the manner of revelation, not that of cold reason.

The symbol probably attracts all writers, but in different degrees. And this difference leads us directly to the question of what we mean by symbolic fiction. As with many other literary questions, the answer to this is not clear-cut, still, we can make some reasonable distinctions. In the largest and loosest sense, all fiction is symbolic, even the most faithful reproduction of life, such as we find in novels like Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, or Farrell's *Studs Lonigan*, has meaning beneath the literal surface (as Dreiser's title indicates). In realistic fiction symbolism works

like this the detail is intended to give a solid sense of everyday reality, while the symbols—intended or not—emerge from it. What we must keep in mind is that here the symbols are a natural part of the reality, as, for example, Lardner's St. Petersburg, a symbol of American middle-class leisure culture.

But there is another kind of fiction, more strictly symbolic, that departs to some degree from reality. This kind contains, in its extreme form, *super-natural* symbols like the witch-meeting in "Young Goodman Brown." Somewhat less extreme, but still drawing on strange, even fantastic subject matter, is the use of what we shall call *non-natural* symbols. For example, it is not natural as in "Christmas Every Day" (see analysis, page 176), for Christmas to be celebrated throughout the year, or, as in "The Judgment," for a son to drown himself on his father's orders, or, as in "Death In Venice," for the hero to meet a succession of men who look curiously alike. These stories are set in natural circumstances, but one thing that clearly makes them different from realistic fiction is that the symbols they contain are not identifiable with everyday life. This difference might be put in another way: in realistic fiction the writer's vision gradually emerges from a selected but recognizable segment of reality, while in symbolic fiction his vision is imposed on reality—he plumps the symbol in the middle of it, as with the artificial Negro, or sometimes, as in the examples just cited, he even distorts it. The symbolic writer does not submit altogether to ordinary reality, he uses it as the scene for his symbolic action. In other words, his vision determines the use to which reality is put, as with Melville's *Moby Dick* (This way of looking at things is really familiar to the reader, for example, Christ determines the way a Christian sees his own life.) In extreme instances, like *Pilgrim's Progress*, ordinary reality is pretty much ignored. Here the writer uses what little reality he presents for the sake of the symbolic allegory. There is a danger here of devaluing ordinary things—the symbolic meaning of a person may become more important than the person.

There is a kind of middle ground, where the symbol and the person are one, in which most symbolic fiction thrives, and "The Artificial Nigger" is a good example. Here the symbols (for example, Mr. Head lost in Atlanta and the Negro statue) are natural. One is likely to get lost in a big city, and one might see just such a statue, particularly in the South. Yet the meaning of the story makes their symbolic use clear. Although the statue in particular is dropped down, as it were, with the force of a revelation, most symbols in this kind of fiction do not confront us so dramatically. Instead, they may be signalized simply by their recurrence, as with the moon, whose different faces at the beginning and the end correspond to the phases of Mr. Head's spiritual condition. Most often, though, they will appear in an offhand way, as with the departing train seen in the image of a serpent, the Biblical symbol of evil. It is just this

symbolic use of what is apparently offhand detail that leads us to one last distinction. In realistic fiction the detail is cumulative in the sense that it all builds up *toward* meaning, in symbolic fiction much if not all of the detail reverberates *from the beginning* with its meaning. Thus, the symbolic story is more dense with significance (it may not be better for that), it has some of the compressed power of the symbolist poetry of our time, notably that of Eliot and Yeats.

The stories that follow are examples of moderate and of fairly extreme symbolic fiction. In our analysis of the moderate "Babylon Revisited" we shall pay particular attention to minute details, to show at some length the significance of matter that might seem to be used only for setting and atmosphere, in our analysis of "Christmas Every Day" we shall briefly consider only the large, controlling symbols.

# Babylon Revisited

F Scott Fitzgerald

"And where's Mr Campbell?" Charlie asked

"Gone to Switzerland Mr Campbell's a pretty sick man, Mr Wales "

"I'm sorry to hear that And George Hardt?" Charlie inquired

"Back in America, gone to work "

"And where is the Snow Bird?"

"He was in here last week Anyway, his friend, Mr Schaeffer, is in Paris "

Two familiar names from the long list of a year and a half ago Charlie scribbled an address in his notebook and tore out the page

"If you see Mr Schaeffer, give him this," he said "It's my brother-in-law's address I haven't settled on a hotel yet "

He was not really disappointed to find Paris was so empty But the stillness in the Ritz bar was strange and portentous It was not an American bar any more—he felt polite in it, and not as if he owned it It had gone back into France He felt the stillness from the moment he got out of the taxi and saw the doorman, usually in a frenzy of activity at this hour, gossiping with a *chasseur* by the servants' entrance

Passing through the corridor, he heard only a single, bored voice in the once-clamorous women's room When he turned into the bar he travelled the twenty feet of green carpet with his eyes fixed straight ahead by old habit, and then, with his foot firmly on the rail, he turned and surveyed the room, encountering only a single pair of eyes that fluttered up from a newspaper in the corner Charlie asked for the head barman, Paul, who in the latter days of the bull market had come to work in his own custom-built car—disembarking, however, with due nicety at the nearest corner But Paul was at his country house today and Alix giving him information

"No, no more," Charlie said, "I'm going slow these days "

Alix congratulated him "You were going pretty strong a couple of years ago "

"I'll stick to it all right," Charlie assured him "I've stuck to it for over a year and a half now "

"How do you find conditions in America?"

"I haven't been to America for months I'm in business in Prague, rep-

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resenting a couple of concerns there They don't know about me down there ”

Alix smiled

“Remember the night of George Hardt's bachelor dinner here?” said Charlie “By the way, what's become of Claude Fessenden?”

Alix lowered his voice confidentially “He s in Paris, but he doesn't come here any more Paul doesn't allow it He ran up a bill of thirty thousand francs, charging all his drinks and his lunches, and usually his dinner, for more than a year And when Paul finally told him he had to pay, he gave him a bad check ”

Alix shook his head sadly

I don't understand it, such a dandy fellow Now he s all bloated up——” He made a plump apple of his hands

Charlie watched a group of strident queens installing themselves in a corner

“Nothing affects them,” he thought “Stocks rise and fall, people loaf or work, but they go on forever ” The place oppressed him He called for the dice and shook with Alix for the drink

“Here for long, Mr Wales?”

“I'm here for four or five days to see my little girl ”

“Oh-h! You have a little girl?”

Outside, the fire-red, gas-blue, ghost-green signs shone smokily through the tranquil rain It was late afternoon and the streets were in movement, the *bistros* gleamed At the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines he took a taxi The Place de la Concorde moved by in pink majesty, they crossed the logical Seine, and Charlie felt the sudden provincial quality of the Left Bank

Charlie directed his taxi to the Avenue de l'Opera, which was out of his way But he wanted to see the blue hour spread over the magnificent façade, and imagine that the cab horns, playing endlessly the first few bars of *Le Plus que Lent*, were the trumpets of the Second Empire They were closing the iron grill in front of Brentano's Bookstore, and people were already at dinner behind the trim little bourgeois hedge of Duval's He had never eaten at a really cheap restaurant in Paris Five-course dinner, four francs fifty, eighteen cents, wine included For some odd reason he wished that he had

As they rolled on to the Left Bank and he felt its sudden provincialism, he thought, “I spoiled this city for myself I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone ”

He was thirty-five, and good to look at The Irish mobility of his face was sobered by a deep wrinkle between his eyes As he rang his brother-in-law's bell in the Rue Palatine, the wrinkle deepened till it pulled down his brows, he felt a cramping sensation in his belly From behind the maid

who opened the door darted a lovely little girl of nine who shrieked "Daddy!" and flew up, struggling like a fish, into his arms. She pulled his head around by one ear and set her cheek against his.

"My old pie," he said.

"Oh, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, dads, dads, dads!"

She drew him into the salon, where the family waited, a boy and a girl his daughter's age, his sister-in-law and her husband. He greeted Marion with his voice pitched carefully to avoid either feigned enthusiasm or dislike, but her response was more frankly tepid, though she minimized her expression of unalterable distrust by directing her regard toward his child. The two men clasped hands in a friendly way and Lincoln Peters rested his for a moment on Charlie's shoulder.

The room was warm and comfortably American. The three children moved intimately about, playing through the yellow oblongs that led to other rooms, the cheer of six o'clock spoke in the eager smacks of the fire and the sounds of French activity in the kitchen. But Charlie did not relax, his heart sat up rigidly in his body and he drew confidence from his daughter, who from time to time came close to him, holding in her arms the doll he had brought.

"Really extremely well," he declared in answer to Lincoln's question. "There's a lot of business there that isn't moving at all, but we're doing even better than ever. In fact, damn well. I'm bringing my sister over from America next month to keep house for me. My income last year was bigger than it was when I had money. You see, the Czechs—"

His boasting was for a specific purpose, but after a moment, seeing a faint restiveness in Lincoln's eye, he changed the subject.

"Those are fine children of yours, well brought up, good manners."

"We think Honoria's a great little girl too."

Marion Peters came back from the kitchen. She was a tall woman with worried eyes, who had once possessed a fresh American loveliness. Charlie had never been sensitive to it and was always surprised when people spoke of how pretty she had been. From the first there had been an instinctive antipathy between them.

"Well, how do you find Honoria?" she asked.

"Wonderful. I was astonished how much she's grown in ten months. All the children are looking well."

"We haven't had a doctor for a year. How do you like being back in Paris?"

"It seems very funny to see so few Americans around."

"I'm delighted," Marion said vehemently. "Now at least you can go into a store without their assuming you're a millionaire. We've suffered like everybody, but on the whole it's a good deal pleasanter."

"But it was nice while it lasted," Charlie said. "We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us. In the bar this

afternoon"—he stumbled, seeing his mistake—"there wasn't a man I knew "

She looked at him keenly "I should think you'd have had enough of bars "

"I only stayed a minute I take one drink every afternoon, and no more "

"Don't you want a cocktail before dinner?" Lincoln asked

"I take only one drink every afternoon, and I've had that "

"I hope you keep to it," said Marion

Her dislike was evident in the coldness with which she spoke but Charlie only smiled, he had larger plans Her very aggressiveness gave him an advantage, and he knew enough to wait He wanted them to initiate the discussion of what they knew had brought him to Paris

At dinner he couldn't decide whether Honoria was most like him or her mother Fortunate if she didn't combine the traits of both that had brought them to disaster A great wave of protectiveness went over him He thought he knew what to do for her He believed in character, he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element Everything else wore out

He left soon after dinner, but not to go home He was curious to see Paris by night with clearer and more judicious eyes than those of other days He bought a *strapontin* for the Casino and watched Josephine Baker go through her chocolate arabesques

After an hour he left and strolled toward Montmartre, up the Rue Pigalle into the Place Blanche The rain had stopped and there were a few people in evening clothes disembarking from taxis in front of cabarets, and *cocottes* prowling singly or in pairs, and many Negroes He passed a lighted door from which issued music, and stopped with the sense of familiarity, it was Bricktop's, where he had parted with so many hours and so much money A few doors farther on he found another ancient rendezvous and incautiously put his head inside Immediately an eager orchestra burst into sound, a pair of professional dancers leaped to their feet and a maitre d'hôtel swooped toward him, crying, "Crowd just arriving, sir!" But he withdrew quickly

"You have to be damn drunk," he thought

Zelli's was closed, the bleak and sinister cheap hotels surrounding it were dark, up in the Rue Blanche there was more light and a local, colloquial French crowd The Poet's Cave had disappeared, but the two great mouths of the Cafe of Heaven and the Cafe of Hell still yawned—even devoured, as he watched, the meagre contents of a tourist bus—a German, a Japanese, and an American couple who glanced at him with frightened eyes

So much for the effort and ingenuity of Montmartre All the catering to vice and waste was on an utterly childish scale, and he suddenly realized the meaning of the word "dissipate"—to dissipate into thin air, to make

nothing out of something In the little hours of the night every move from place to place was an enormous human jump, an increase of paying for the privilege of slower and slower motion

He remembered thousand-franc notes given to an orchestra for playing a single number, hundred-franc notes tossed to a doorman for calling a cab

But it hadn't been given for nothing

It had been given, even the most wildly squandered sum, as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth remembering, the things that now he would always remember—his child taken from his control, his wife escaped to a grave in Vermont

In the glare of a *brasserie* a woman spoke to him He bought her some eggs and coffee, and then, eluding her encouraging stare, gave her a twenty-franc note and took a taxi to his hotel

## II

He woke upon a fine fall day—football weather The depression of yesterday was gone and he liked the people on the streets At noon he sat opposite Honoria at Le Grand Vatel, the only restaurant he could think of not reminiscent of champagne dinners and long luncheons that began at two and ended in a blurred and vague twilight

"Now, how about vegetables? Oughtn't you to have some vegetables?"

"Well, yes "

"Here's *epinards* and *chou-fleur* and carrots and *haricots* "

"I'd like *chou-fleur* "

"Wouldn't you like to have two vegetables?"

"I usually only have one at lunch "

The waiter was pretending to be inordinately fond of children *Qu'elle est mignonne la petite! Elle parle exactement comme une française*

"How about dessert? Shall we wait and see?"

The waiter disappeared Honoria looked at her father expectantly

"What are we going to do?"

"First, we're going to that toy store in the Rue Saint-Honore and buy you anything you like And then we're going to the vaudeville at the Empire "

She hesitated "I like it about the vaudeville, but not the toy store "

"Why not?"

"Well, you brought me this doll " She had it with her "And I've got lots of things And we're not rich any more, are we?"

"We never were But today you are to have anything you want "

"All right," she agreed resignedly

When there had been her mother and a French nurse he had been inclined to be strict, now he extended himself, reached out for a new toler-



ance, he must be both parents to her and not shut any of her out of communication

"I want to get to know you," he said gravely "First let me introduce myself My name is Charles J Wales, of Prague "

"Oh, daddy!" her voice cracked with laughter

"And who are you, please?" he persisted, and she accepted a rôle immediately "Honoria Wales Rue Palatine, Paris "

"Married or single?"

"No, not married Single "

He indicated the doll "But I see you have a child, madame "

Unwilling to disinherit it, she took it to her heart and thought quickly "Yes, I've been married, but I'm not married now My husband is dead "

He went on quickly, "And the child's name?"

"Simone That's after my best friend at school "

"I'm very pleased that you're doing so well at school "

"I'm third this month," she boasted "Elsie"—that was her cousin—"is only about eighteenth, and Richard is about at the bottom "

"You like Richard and Elsie, don't you?"

"Oh, yes I like Richard quite well and I like her all right "

Cautiously and casually he asked "And Aunt Marion and Uncle Lincoln—which do you like best?"

"Oh, Uncle Lincoln, I guess "

He was increasingly aware of her presence As they came in, a murmur of "adorable" followed them, and now the people at the next table bent all their silences upon her, staring as if she were something no more conscious than a flower

"Why don't I live with you?" she asked suddenly "Because mamma's dead?"

"You must stay here and learn more French It would have been hard for daddy to take care of you so well "

"I don't really need much taking care of any more I do everything for myself "

Going out of the restaurant, a man and a woman unexpectedly hailed him

"Well, the old Wales!"

"Hello there, Lorraine Dunc "

Sudden ghosts out of the past Duncan Schaeffer, a friend from college Lorraine Quarries, a lovely, pale blonde of thirty, one of a crowd who had helped them make months into days in the lavish times of three years ago

"My husband couldn't come this year," she said, in answer to his question "We're poor as hell So he gave me two hundred a month and told me I could do my worst on that This your little girl?"

"What about coming back and sitting down?" Duncan asked

"Can't do it " He was glad for an excuse As always, he felt Lorraine's passionate, provocative attraction, but his own rhythm was different now

"Well, how about dinner? " she asked

"I'm not free Give me your address and let me call you "

"Charlie, I believe you're sober," she said judiciously "I honestly believe he's sober, Dunc Pinch him and see if he s sober "

Charlie indicated Honoria with his head They both laughed

"What's your address? " said Duncan sceptically

He hesitated, unwilling to give the name of his hotel

"I'm not settled yet I'd better call you We're going to see the vaudeville at the Empire "

"There! That's what I want to do," Lorraine said I want to see some clowns and acrobats and jugglers That's just what we'll do, Dunc "

"We've got to do an errand first," said Charlie "Perhaps we'll see you there "

"All right, you snob Good-by, beautiful little girl "

' Good-by "

Honoria bobbed politely

Somehow, an unwelcome encounter They liked him because he was functioning because he was serious, they wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from his strength

At the Empire, Honoria proudly refused to sit upon her father's folded coat She was already an individual with a code of her own, and Charlie was more and more absorbed by the desire of putting a little of himself into her before she crystallized utterly It was hopeless to try to know her in so short a time

Between the acts they came upon Duncan and Lorraine in the lobby where the band was playing

"Have a drink?"

"All right, but not up at the bar We'll take a table "

"The perfect father "

Listening abstractedly to Lorraine, Charlie watched Honoria's eyes leave their table, and he followed them wistfully about the room, wondering what they saw He met her glance and she smiled

"I like that lemonade," she said

What had she said? What had he expected? Going home in a taxi afterward, he pulled her over until her head rested against his chest

"Darling, do you ever think about your mother?"

"Yes, sometimes," she answered vaguely

"I don't want you to forget her Have you got a picture of her?"

"Yes, I think so Anyhow, Aunt Marion has Why don't you want me to forget her?"

"She loved you very much "

"I loved her too "

They were silent for a moment

"Daddy, I want to come and live with you," she said suddenly

His heart leaped he had wanted it to come like this

"Aren't you perfectly happy?"

"Yes but I love you better than anybody else And you love me better than anybody don't you now that mummy's dead?"

Of course I do But you won't always like me best, honey You'll grow up and meet somebody your own age and go marry him and forget you ever had a daddy "

"Yes that's true " she agreed tranquilly

He didn't go in He was coming back at nine o'clock and he wanted to keep himself fresh and new for the thing he must say then

"When you're safe inside, just show yourself in that window "

'All right Good-by dads, dads, dads, dads "

He waited in the dark street until she appeared, all warm and glowing, in the window above and kissed her fingers out into the night

### III

They were waiting Marion sat behind the coffee service in a dignified black dinner dress that just faintly suggested mourning Lincoln was walking up and down with the animation of one who had already been talking They were as anxious as he was to get into the question He opened it almost immediately

"I suppose you know what I want to see you about—why I really came to Paris "

Marion played with the black stars on her necklace and frowned

"I'm awfully anxious to have a home," he continued "And I'm awfully anxious to have Honoria in it I appreciate your taking in Honoria for her mother's sake, but things have changed now"—he hesitated and then continued more forcibly—"changed radically with me, and I want to ask you to reconsider the matter It would be silly for me to deny that about three years ago I was acting badly——"

Marion looked up at him with hard eyes

"——but all that's over As I told you, I haven't had more than a drink a day for over a year, and I take that drink deliberately, so that the idea of alcohol won't get too big in my imagination You see the idea?"

"No," said Marion succinctly

"It's a sort of stunt I set myself It keeps the matter in proportion "

"I get you," said Lincoln "You don't want to admit it's got any attraction for you "

"Something like that Sometimes I forget and don't take it But I try to take it Anyhow, I couldn't afford to drink in my position The people

I represent are more than satisfied with what I've done, and I'm bringing my sister over from Burlington to keep house for me, and I want awfully to have Honoria too. You know that even when her mother and I weren't getting along well we never let anything that happened touch Honoria. I know she's fond of me and I know I'm able to take care of her and—well, there you are. How do you feel about it?"

He knew that now he would have to take a beating. It would last an hour or two hours, and it would be difficult, but if he modulated his inevitable resentment to the chastened attitude of the reformed sinner, he might win his point in the end.

Keep your temper, he told himself. You don't want to be justified. You want Honoria.

Lincoln spoke first. "We've been talking it over ever since we got your letter last month. We're happy to have Honoria here. She's a dear little thing, and we're glad to be able to help her, but of course that isn't the question——"

Marion interrupted suddenly. "How long are you going to stay sober, Charlie?" she asked.

"Permanently, I hope."

"How can anybody count on that?"

"You know I never did drink heavily until I gave up business and came over here with nothing to do. Then Helen and I began to run around with——"

"Please leave Helen out of it. I can't bear to hear you talk about her like that."

He stared at her grimly, he had never been certain how fond of each other the sisters were in life.

"My drinking only lasted about a year and a half—from the time we came over until I—collapsed."

"It was time enough."

"It was time enough," he agreed.

"My duty is entirely to Helen," she said. "I try to think what she would have wanted me to do. Frankly, from the night you did that terrible thing you haven't really existed for me. I can't help that. She was my sister."

"Yes."

"When she was dying she asked me to look out for Honoria. If you hadn't been in a sanitarium then, it might have helped matters."

He had no answer.

"I'll never in my life be able to forget the morning when Helen knocked at my door, soaked to the skin and shivering, and said you'd locked her out."

Charlie gripped the sides of the chair. This was more difficult than he expected, he wanted to launch out into a long expostulation and expla-

nation, but he only said "The night I locked her out——" and she interrupted, "I don't feel up to going over that again "

After a moment's silence Lincoln said 'We're getting off the subject You want Marion to set aside her legal guardianship and give you Honoria I think the main point for her is whether she has confidence in you or not "

"I don't blame Marion," Charlie said slowly, "but I think she can have entire confidence in me I had a good record up to three years ago Of course, it's within human possibilities I might go wrong any time But if we wait much longer I'll lose Honoria's childhood and my chance for a home " He shook his head, "I'll simply lose her, don't you see?"

"Yes, I see," said Lincoln

'Why didn't you think of all this before?" Marion asked

"I suppose I did, from time to time, but Helen and I were getting along badly When I consented to the guardianship, I was flat on my back in a sanitarium and the market had cleaned me out I knew I'd acted badly, and I thought if it would bring any peace to Helen, I'd agree to anything But now it's different I'm functioning, I'm behaving damn well, so far as——"

"Please don't swear at me," Marion said

He looked at her, startled With each remark the force of her dislike became more and more apparent She had built up all her fear of life into one wall and faced it toward him This trivial reproof was possibly the result of some trouble with the cook several hours before Charlie became increasingly alarmed at leaving Honoria in this atmosphere of hostility against himself, sooner or later it would come out, in a word here, a shake of the head there, and some of that distrust would be irrevocably implanted in Honoria But he pulled his temper down out of his face and shut it up inside him, he had won a point, for Lincoln realized the absurdity of Marion's remark and asked her lightly since when she had objected to the word "damn "

"Another thing," Charlie said "I'm able to give her certain advantages now I'm going to take a French governess to Prague with me I've got a lease on a new apartment——"

He stopped, realizing that he was blundering They couldn't be expected to accept with equanimity the fact that his income was again twice as large as their own

"I suppose you can give her more luxuries than we can," said Marion "When you were throwing away money we were living along watching every ten francs I suppose you'll start doing it again "

"Oh, no," he said "I've learned I worked hard for ten years, you know—until I got lucky in the market, like so many people Terribly lucky It didn't seem any use working any more, so I quit It won't happen again "

There was a long silence. All of them felt their nerves straining and for the first time in a year Charlie wanted a drink. He was sure now that Lincoln Peters wanted him to have his child.

Marion shuddered suddenly, part of her saw that Charlie's feet were planted on the earth now, and her own maternal feeling recognized the naturalness of his desire, but she had lived for a long time with a prejudice—a prejudice founded on a curious disbelief in her sister's happiness, and which, in the shock of one terrible night, had turned to hatred for him. It had all happened at a point in her life where the discouragement of ill health and adverse circumstances made it necessary for her to believe in tangible villainy and a tangible villain.

"I can't help what I think!" she cried out suddenly. "How much you were responsible for Helen's death, I don't know. It's something you'll have to square with your own conscience."

An electric current of agony surged through him, for a moment he was almost on his feet, an unuttered sound echoing in his throat. He hung on to himself for a moment, another moment.

"Hold on there," said Lincoln uncomfortably. "I never thought you were responsible for that."

"Helen died of heart trouble," Charlie said dully.

"Yes, heart trouble," Marion spoke as if the phrase had another meaning for her.

Then, in the flatness that followed her outburst, she saw him plainly and she knew he had somehow arrived at control over the situation. Glancing at her husband, she found no help from him, and as abruptly as if it were a matter of no importance, she threw up the sponge.

"Do what you like!" she cried, springing up from her chair. "She's your child. I'm not the person to stand in your way. I think if it were my child I'd rather see her——" She managed to check herself. "You two decide it. I can't stand this. I'm sick. I'm going to bed."

She hurried from the room, after a moment Lincoln said:

"This has been a hard day for her. You know how strongly she feels——" His voice was almost apologetic. "When a woman gets an idea in her head."

"Of course."

"It's going to be all right. I think she sees now that you—can provide for the child, and so we can't very well stand in your way or Honoria's way."

"Thank you, Lincoln."

"I'd better go along and see how she is."

"I'm going."

He was still trembling when he reached the street, but a walk down the Rue Bonaparte to the *quais* set him up, and as he crossed the Seine, fresh and new by the *quai* lamps, he felt exultant. But back in his room

he couldn't sleep The image of Helen haunted him Helen whom he had loved so until they had senselessly begun to abuse each other's love, tear it into shreds On that terrible February night that Marion remembered so vividly, a slow quarrel had gone on for hours There was a scene at the Florida, and then he attempted to take her home, and then she kissed young Webb at a table, after that there was what she had hysterically said When he arrived home alone he turned the key in the lock in wild anger How could he know she would arrive an hour later alone, that there would be a snowstorm in which she wandered about in slippers, too confused to find a taxi? Then the aftermath, her escaping pneumonia by a miracle, and all the attendant horror They were "reconciled," but that was the beginning of the end, and Marion, who had seen with her own eyes and who imagined it to be one of many scenes from her sister's martyrdom, never forgot

Going over it again brought Helen nearer, and in the white, soft light that steals upon half sleep near morning he found himself talking to her again She said that he was perfectly right about Honoria and that she wanted Honoria to be with him She said she was glad he was being good and doing better She said a lot of other things—very friendly things—but she was in a swing in a white dress, and swinging faster and faster all the time, so that at the end he could not hear clearly all that she said

#### IV

He woke up feeling happy The door of the world was open again He made plans, vistas, futures for Honoria and himself, but suddenly he grew sad, remembering all the plans he and Helen had made She had not planned to die The present was the thing—work to do and someone to love But not to love too much, for he knew the injury that a father can do to a daughter or a mother to a son by attaching them too closely afterward, out in the world, the child would seek in the marriage partner the same blind tenderness and, failing probably to find it, turn against love and life

It was another bright, crisp day He called Lincoln Peters at the bank where he worked and asked if he could count on taking Honoria when he left for Prague Lincoln agreed that there was no reason for delay One thing—the legal guardianship Marion wanted to retain that a while longer She was upset by the whole matter, and it would oil things if she felt that the situation was still in her control for another year Charlie agreed, wanting only the tangible, visible child

Then the question of a governess Charlie sat in a gloomy agency and talked to a cross Bernaise and to a buxom Breton peasant, neither of whom he could have endured There were others whom he would see tomorrow

He lunched with Lincoln Peters at Griffons, trying to keep down his exultation

"There's nothing quite like your own child," Lincoln said "But you understand how Marion feels too "

"She's forgotten how hard I worked for seven years there," Charlie said "She just remembers one night "

"There's another thing " Lincoln hesitated "While you and Helen were tearing around Europe throwing money away, we were just getting along I didn't touch any of the prosperity because I never got ahead enough to carry anything but my insurance I think Marion felt there was some kind of injustice in it—you not even working toward the end, and getting richer and richer "

"It went just as quick as it came," said Charlie

"Yes, a lot of it stayed in the hands of *chasseurs* and saxophone players and maitres d'hotel—well, the big party's over now I just said that to explain Marion's feelings about those crazy years If you drop in about six o'clock tonight before Marion's too tired, we'll settle the details on the spot "

Back at his hotel, Charlie found a *pneumatique* that had been re-directed from the Ritz bar where Charlie had left his address for the purpose of finding a certain man

DEAR CHARLIE You were so strange when we saw you the other day that I wondered if I did something to offend you If so I'm not conscious of it In fact I have thought about you too much for the last year, and it's always been in the back of my mind that I might see you if I came over here We *did* have such good times that crazy spring, like the night you and I stole the butcher's tricycle, and the time we tried to call on the president and you had the old derby rim and the wire cane Everybody seems so old lately but I don't feel old a bit Couldn't we get together some time today for old time's sake? I've got a vile hang over for the moment, but will be feeling better this afternoon and will look for you about five in the sweat-shop at the Ritz

Always devotedly,

LORRAINE

His first feeling was one of awe that he had actually, in his mature years, stolen a tricycle and pedalled Lorraine all over the Étoile between the small hours and dawn In retrospect it was a nightmare Locking out Helen didn't fit in with any other act of his life, but the tricycle incident did—it was one of many How many weeks or months of dissipation to arrive at that condition of utter irresponsibility?

He tried to picture how Lorraine had appeared to him then—very attractive, Helen was unhappy about it, though she said nothing Yesterday, in the restaurant, Lorraine had seemed trite, blurred, worn away He



emphatically did not want to see her, and he was glad Alix had not given away his hotel address. It was a relief to think, instead, of Honoria, think of Sundays spent with her and of saying good morning to her and of knowing she was there in his house at night, drawing her breath in the darkness.

At five he took a taxi and bought presents for all the Peters—a piquant cloth doll, a box of Roman soldiers, flowers for Marion, big linen handkerchiefs for Lincoln.

He saw, when he arrived in the apartment, that Marion had accepted the inevitable. She greeted him now as though he were a recalcitrant member of the family, rather than a menacing outsider. Honoria had been told she was going, Charlie was glad to see that her tact made her conceal her excessive happiness. Only on his lap did she whisper her delight and the question "When?" before she slipped away with the other children.

He and Marion were alone for a minute in the room, and on an impulse he spoke out boldly.

"Family quarrels are bitter things. They don't go according to any rule. They're not like aches or wounds, they're more like splits in the skin that won't heal because there's not enough material. I wish you and I could be on better terms."

"Some things are hard to forget," she answered. "It's a question of confidence." There was no answer to this and presently she asked, "When do you propose to take her?"

"As soon as I can get a governess. I hoped the day after tomorrow."

"That's impossible. I've got to get her things in shape. Not before Saturday."

He yielded. Coming back into the room, Lincoln offered him a drink.

"I'll take my daily whisky," he said.

It was warm here, it was a home, people together by a fire. The children felt very safe and important, the mother and father were serious and watchful. They had things to do for the children more important than his visit here. A spoonful of medicine was, after all, more important than the strained relations between Marion and himself. They were not dudded people, but they were very much in the grip of life and circumstances. He wondered if he couldn't do something to get Lincoln out of his rut at the bank.

A long peal at the door-bell, the *bonne a tout faire* passed through and went down the corridor. The door opened upon another long ring, and then voices, and the three in the salon looked up expectantly. Richard moved to bring the corridor within his range of vision, and Marion rose. Then the maid came back along the corridor, closely followed by the voices, which developed under the light into Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quarrels.

They were gay, they were hilarious, they were roaring with laughter.

For a moment Charlie was astounded, unable to understand how they ferreted out the Peters' address

"Ah-h-h!" Duncan wagged his finger roguishly at Charlie "Ah-h-h!"

They both slid down another cascade of laughter. Anxious and at a loss, Charlie shook hands with them quickly and presented them to Lincoln and Marion. Marion nodded, scarcely speaking. She had drawn back a step toward the fire, her little girl beside her, and Marion put an arm about her shoulder.

With growing annoyance at the intrusion, Charlie waited for them to explain themselves. After some concentration Duncan said:

'We came to invite you out to dinner. Lorraine and I insist that all this shishi, cagy business 'bout your address got to stop.'

Charlie came closer to them, as if to force them backward down the corridor.

"Sorry, but I can't. Tell me where you'll be and I'll phone you in half an hour."

This made no impression. Lorraine sat down suddenly on the side of a chair, and focussing her eyes on Richard, cried, 'Oh, what a nice little boy! Come here, little boy.' Richard glanced at his mother, but did not move. With a perceptible shrug of her shoulders, Lorraine turned back to Charlie.

"Come and dine. Sure your cousins won't mind. See you so sel'om. Or solemn."

"I can't," said Charlie sharply. "You two have dinner and I'll phone you."

Her voice became suddenly unpleasant. "All right, we'll go. But I remember once when you hammered on my door at four A.M. I was enough of a good sport to give you a drink. Come on, Dunc."

Still in slow motion, with blurred, angry faces, with uncertain feet, they retired along the corridor.

'Good night,' Charlie said.

"Good night!" responded Lorraine emphatically.

When he went back into the salon Marion had not moved, only now her son was standing in the circle of her other arm. Lincoln was still swinging Honoria back and forth like a pendulum from side to side.

'What an outrage!' Charlie broke out. 'What an absolute outrage!'

Neither of them answered. Charlie dropped into an armchair, picked up his drink, set it down again and said:

"People I haven't seen for two years having the colossal nerve——"

He broke off. Marion had made the sound "Oh!" in one swift, furious breath, turned her body from him with a jerk and left the room.

Lincoln set down Honoria carefully.

"You children go in and start your soup," he said, and when they obeyed, he said to Charlie:

"Marion's not well and she can't stand shocks That kind of people make her really physically sick "

"I didn't tell them to come here They wormed your name out of somebody They deliberately——"

"Well, it's too bad It doesn't help matters Excuse me a minute "

Left alone, Charlie sat tense in his chair In the next room he could hear the children eating, talking in monosyllables, already oblivious to the scene between their elders He heard a murmur of conversation from a farther room and then the ticking bell of a telephone receiver picked up and in a panic he moved to the other side of the room and out of earshot

In a minute Lincoln came back "Look here, Charlie I think we'd better call off dinner for tonight Marion's in bad shape "

"Is she angry with me?"

"Sort of," he said, almost roughly "She's not strong and——"

"You mean she's changed her mind about Honoria?"

"She's pretty bitter right now I don't know You phone me at the bank tomorrow "

"I wish you'd explain to her I never dreamed these people would come here I'm just as sore as you are "

"I couldn't explain anything to her now "

Charlie got up He took his coat and hat and started down the corridor Then he opened the door of the dining room and said in a strange voice 'Good night, children "

Honoria rose and ran around the table to hug him

"Good night, sweetheart," he said vaguely, and then trying to make his voice more tender, trying to conciliate something "Good night, dear children "

## V

Charlie went directly to the Ritz bar with the furious idea of finding Lorraine and Duncan, but they were not there, and he realized that in any case there was nothing he could do He had not touched his drink at the Peters', and now he ordered a whisky-and-soda Paul came over to say hello

"It's a great change," he said sadly "We do about half the business we did So many fellows I hear about back in the States lost everything maybe not in the first crash, but then in the second Your friend George Hardt lost every cent, I hear Are you back in the States?"

"No, I'm in business in Prague "

"I heard that you lost a lot in the crash "

"I did," and he added grimly, "but I lost everything I wanted in the boom "

"Selling short "

"Something like that "

Again the memory of those days swept over him like a nightmare—the people they had met traveling, then people who couldn't add a row of figures or speak a coherent sentence. The little man Helen had consented to dance with at the ship's party, who had insulted her ten feet from the table, the women and girls carried screaming with drink or drugs out of public places——

——The men who locked their wives out in the snow, because the snow of twenty-nine wasn't real snow. If you didn't want it to be snow, you just paid some money.

He went to the phone and called the Peters' apartment, Lincoln answered.

"I called up because this thing is on my mind. Has Marion said anything definite?"

"Marion's sick," Lincoln answered abruptly. "I know this thing isn't altogether your fault, but I can't have her go to pieces about it. I'm afraid we'll have to let it slide for six months, I can't take the chance of working her up to this state again."

"I see."

"I'm sorry, Charlie."

He went back to his table. His whisky glass was empty, but he shook his head when Alix looked at it questioningly. There wasn't much he could do now except send Honoria some things, he would send her a lot of things tomorrow. He thought rather angrily that this was just money—he had given so many people money.

"No, no more," he said to another waiter. "What do I owe you?"

He would come back some day, they couldn't make him pay forever. But he wanted his child, and nothing was much good now, beside that fact. He wasn't young any more, with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have by himself. He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone.

## COMMENT

Our story is about the conflict between the past and the present—more particularly, as we shall see, between Charlie Wales's bohemian past and his bourgeois present. As the name *Babylon* indicates, Fitzgerald visualized Charlie's conflict symbolically. Our interest is in how he realized his symbolic vision.

The controlling symbol, Babylon, is a metaphor standing for Charlie's past, the Paris where he had thrown away all he now regretted losing. Metaphor is peculiarly fitted for symbolic use, for, like the non-natural symbols discussed in the introduction, it is an image alien to the scene, suddenly brought in and plumped down, as it were, in a familiar setting. The metaphor of Babylon transforms the scene through the symbolic vision.

it imposes. This vision is in part one of homosexuality, whoredom, and waste, as is suggested by passages from the Bible, its ultimate source. Isaiah 13:19 prophesies that "Babylon shall be as when God overthrew Sodom", Revelation 17:5 denounces it as the "mother of harlots", Jeremiah 50:23 proclaims, "How is Babylon become a desolation among nations."

As a story of losses, Fitzgerald's tale properly begins in the Ritz bar, symbolic setting of Babylon. Unlike the Babylonian metaphor, the Ritz bar is a natural part of the setting, emerging as a symbol from its ground in familiar reality. This symbol at once brings the Babylonian past into the present, foreshadowing the turn events will take. Fitzgerald strategically deploys it to envelop the structure, just as Babylon itself envelops and closes in on Charlie Wales.

Let us now look more closely at how Fitzgerald builds up the power of the Babylonian symbol through the use of apparently casual, naturalistic detail. To remind Charlie Wales of the decadence of Babylon, and therefore of his past, Fitzgerald has a "group of strident queens" enter the Ritz bar. The "queens," as we know, are homosexuals, connoting the Biblical Sodom that Isaiah invoked as a warning to Babylon. Again, *cocottes* strolling through bohemian Montmartre and a woman in the *brasserie* suggest the image of Babylon as the "mother of harlots." And when Charlie inquires about his old friends, he is informed that one is sick, recuperating in Switzerland, and that another is bloated from drink and in debt—both symbolic analogies of Charlie's own past. Babylon has indeed become a "desolation among nations," as we understand more obviously from the empty Ritz bar and the wan, commercial attractions of bohemian Montmartre, its other important realistic symbol.

This is part of the detail which concretely renders the setting and atmosphere symbolic of Charlie's Babylonian past. True, it is a weakened past, gesturing to him with apparent futility. But the fact that it is still present, literally and in memory, is a way of indicating that it is still a force, thus foreshadowing the future.

We have seen that Babylon is a symbol of one aspect of the present as well as the past. But to see it in its full significance we must contrast it with another kind of setting and atmosphere, symbolic of Charlie's present middle-class values. That these are his new values is natural, for he has returned to Paris to regain the custody of his child Honoria (the name suggests an allegorical play on redeeming his honor), to provide a home for her, to settle down to a solid middle-class existence. Implicit in his revulsion against the Left Bank, these values are shown explicitly through Charlie's responses to other sections of Paris. Thus, as he strolls along in meditation, the rain is "tranquil" to him (in contrast to the "strident queens") and the Seine is "logical", both epithets suggest moderation and reason, values of the middle class. Again, before he arrives at the Peters' home, he sees people "at dinner behind the trim little bourgeois hedge of Duval's" and wishes he had eaten at such modest middle-class restaurants. And so it is that now the Peters' home appears to him "warm and comfortably American," with "the cheer of six o'clock" and "the eager smacks

of the fire” In these and other instances the symbolic detail of the Babylonian setting and atmosphere is countered by that of the middle class

From this evidence we see that in fiction conflicts are revealed not only through overt action, but also through covert, symbolic detail Apparently flat and unobtrusive notations are really vibrant with the tensions of a story Let us now look at another symbolic group, that of royalty, one in which we see an ironic play within the symbol After Charlie leaves the Left Bank (his past), he is stimulated by impressions of another kind of past As he strolls through the Paris of the old aristocracy, the Place de la Concorde takes on a “pink majesty” for him, and this note is quickly sounded again when he imagines the cab horns as “trumpets of the Second Empire” Later, Charlie and Honoria go to the vaudeville at the Empire With these symbols of the magnificent aristocratic past of Paris in his mind, Charlie is repelled by “the provincial quality of the left bank” The irony is superb, for the Left Bank considered itself, above all, cosmopolitan Perhaps the most interesting detail in this symbol of majesty is Charlie’s remark to Marion Peters that he and his friends were “a sort of royalty” How are we to understand this? Are we to take it at his valuation? In one sense, yes—but they were ultimately a rotten royalty Thus, this image of Babylonian royalty and that of the “strident queens” make for an ironic contrast within the symbolic group of majesty Earlier we noted two groups of symbols opposing each other in the eternal war between bohemia and the bourgeois, now we have one group containing *within* it a variation of that war And all these conflicts of symbolic groups reflect on the relation of the past to the present

We are now prepared to understand the full symbolic meaning of the fatal intrusion of Charlie’s friends, Lorraine Quarrles and Duncan Schaeffer We said at the beginning that the conflict was between Charlie’s bohemian past and bourgeois present Now the pair are symbolic analogies of that past, and it is their intrusion, giving the plot a decisive turn, which provides us with our full insight into the role of the past in this story It is not enough to say that the theme is the *conflict* between past and present We can now put it more precisely as the *persistence* of the past in the present, or, paradoxically, that the present *is* the past—we are only what we have been This is an especially interesting theme for Americans (like Charlie Wales) We pride ourselves on being forward-looking, progressive, always moving toward a brighter future—a condition of comedy We tend to disregard the past—a condition of tragedy

## QUESTIONS ON SYMBOLISM

1 In this story snow becomes symbolic through its recurrence Charlie inquires about a friend called the Snow Bird (a snow bird is a dope addict), his wife is locked out in the snow, and he reflects on it in a summary way at the end Analyze the tensions in this symbol

2 What is the symbolic significance of this passage “The Poet’s Cave had disappeared, but the two great mouths of the Cafe of Heaven and the Cafe of Hell still yawned ”?”

3 What do you make of the fact that while Charlie wants to take Honoria to a toy store on the Rue Saint-Honore, she does not want to go?

4 What is the significance of the following passages? (a) "Stocks rise and fall, people loaf or work, but they [the strident queens] go on forever" (b) "He woke upon a fine fall day—football weather" Why does Paul, the head barman at the Ritz, appear only at the end?

### *Other Considerations*

1 Has Fitzgerald succumbed to our characteristic sentimental melodrama, in which the American way is regarded as good and the European way as bad? Has he fallen for the cant of "Home, Sweet Home"?

2 With the climax of the story, the direction of the action changes, or reverses. This change in direction usually brings about a change in the consciousness of the central figure, he learns about himself. What evidence is there of this?

3 The story is told by the omniscient author, but through the consciousness of Charlie Wales only. What effects are gained by telling the story from this point of view? What would be lost if the story were told from the first-person point of view?

4 Charlie Wales does not recover his daughter. Are we to conclude, then, that Marion Peters' moral position is unqualifiedly right?

5 Is the father-daughter relationship sentimental? Is the last paragraph?

# Christmas Every Day

*Heinrich Boll*

Symptoms of decline have become evident in our family. For a time we were at pains to disregard them, but now we have resolved to face the danger. I dare not, as yet, use the word breakdown, but disturbing facts are piling up at such a rate as to constitute a menace and to compel me to report things that will sound disagreeable to my contemporaries, no one, however, can dispute their reality. The minute fungi of destruction have found lodgement beneath the hard, thick crust of respectability, colonies of deadly parasites that proclaim the end of a whole tribe's irreproachable correctness. Today we must deplore our disregard of Cousin Franz, who began long ago to warn us of the dreadful consequences that would result from an event that was harmless enough in itself. So insignificant indeed was the event that the disproportion of the consequences now terrifies us. Franz warned us betimes. Unfortunately he had too little standing. He had chosen a calling that no member of the family had ever followed before, and none ever should have. He was a boxer. Melancholy even in youth and possessed by a devoutness that was always described as "pious fiddle-faddle," he early adopted ways that worried my Uncle Franz, that good, kind man. He was wont to neglect his schoolwork to a quite abnormal degree. He used to meet disreputable companions in the thickets and deserted parks of the suburbs, and there practice the rough discipline of the prize fight, with no thought for his neglected humanistic heritage. These youngsters early revealed the vices of their generation, which, as has since become abundantly evident, is really worthless. The exciting spiritual combats of earlier centuries simply did not interest them, they were far too concerned with the dubious excitements of their own. At first I thought Franz's piety in contradiction to his systematic exercises in passive and active brutality. But today I begin to suspect a connection. This is a subject I shall have to return to.

And so it was Franz who warned us in good time, who refused above all to have anything to do with certain celebrations, calling the whole thing a folly and a disgrace, and later on declined to participate in those measures that proved necessary for the continuance of what he considered evil. But, as I have said, he had too little standing to get a hearing in the family circle.



Now, to be sure, things have gone so far that we stand helpless, not knowing how to call a halt

Franz has long since become a famous boxer, but today he rejects the praises that the family lavishes on him with the same indifference he once showed toward their criticism

His brother, however—my Cousin Johannes, a man for whom I would at any time have walked through fire, the successful lawyer and favorite son of my Uncle—Johannes is said to have struck up relations with the Communist Party, a rumor I stubbornly refuse to believe My Cousin Lucie, hitherto a normal woman, is said to frequent disreputable night-clubs, accompanied by her helpless husband, and to engage in dances that I can only describe as existential Even Uncle Franz, that good, kind man, is reported to have remarked that he is weary of life, he whom the whole family considered a paragon of vitality and the very model of what we were taught to call a Christian businessman

Doctors' bills are piling up, psychiatrists and analysts are being called in Only my Aunt Milla, who must be considered the cause of it all, enjoys the best of health, smiling, well and cheerful, as she has been almost all her life Her liveliness and cheerfulness are slowly beginning to get on our nerves after our very serious concern about the state of her health For there was a crisis in her life that threatened to be serious It is just this that I must explain

## II

In retrospect it is easy enough to determine the source of a disquieting series of events, but only now, when I regard the matter dispassionately, do the things that have been taking place in our family for almost two years appear out of the ordinary

We might have surmised earlier that something was not quite right Something in fact was not, and if things ever were quite right—which I doubt—events are now taking place that fill me with consternation

For a long time Aunt Milla has been famous in our family for her delight in decorating the Christmas tree, a harmless though particularized weakness which is fairly widespread in our country This weakness of hers was indulgently smiled at by one and all, and the resistance that Franz showed from his earliest days to this "nonsense" was treated with indignation, especially since Franz was in other respects a disturbing young man He refused to take part in the decoration of the tree Up to a certain point all this was taken in stride My aunt had become accustomed to Franz's staying away from the preparations at Advent and also from the celebration itself and only putting in an appearance for the meal It was not even mentioned

At the risk of making myself unpopular, I must here mention a fact

in defense of which I can only say that it really is a fact. In the years 1939 to 1945 we were at war. In war there is singing, shooting, oratory, fighting, starvation and death—and bombs are dropped. These are thoroughly disagreeable subjects, and I have no desire to bore my contemporaries by dwelling on them. I must only mention them because the war had an influence on the story I am about to tell. For the war registered on my aunt simply as a force that, as early as Christmas 1939, began to threaten her Christmas tree. To be sure, this tree of hers was peculiarly sensitive.

As its principal attraction my Aunt Milla's Christmas tree was furnished with glass gnomes that held cork hammers in their upraised hands. At their feet were bell-shaped anvils, and under their feet candles were fastened. When the heat rose to a certain degree, a hidden mechanism went into operation, imparting a hectic movement to the gnomes' arms, a dozen in number, they beat like mad on the bell-shaped anvils with their cork hammers, thus producing a concerted, high-pitched, elfin tinkling. And at the top of the tree stood a red-cheeked angel, dressed in silver, who at certain intervals opened his lips and whispered "Peace, peace." The mechanical secret of the angel was strictly guarded, and I only learned about it later, when as it happened I had the opportunity of admiring it almost weekly. Naturally in addition to this my aunt's Christmas tree was decorated with sugar rings, cookies, angel hair, marzipan figures and, not to be forgotten, strands of tinsel. I still remember that the proper preparation of these varied decorations cost a good deal of trouble, demanding the help of all, and the whole family on Christmas Eve was too nervous to be hungry. The mood, as people say, was simply terrible, and the one exception was my Cousin Franz, who of course had taken no part in the preparations and was the only one to enjoy the roasts, asparagus, creams and ices. If after that we came for a call on the day after Christmas and ventured the bold conjecture that the secret of the speaking angel resided in the same sort of mechanism that makes certain dolls say "Mama" or "Papa," we were simply greeted by derisive laughter.

Now it is easy to understand that in the neighborhood of falling bombs such a sensitive tree would be in great danger. There were terrible times when the gnomes pitched down from the tree, and once even the angel fell. My aunt was inconsolable. She went to endless pains to restore the tree completely after each air raid so as to preserve it at least through the Christmas holidays. But by 1940 it was out of the question. Once more at the risk of making myself unpopular I must briefly mention here that the number of air raids on our city was considerable, to say nothing of their severity. In any case my aunt's Christmas tree fell victim to the modern art of war (regulations forbid me to say anything about other victims), foreign ballistics experts temporarily extinguished it.

We all sympathized with our aunt, who was an amiable and charming woman, and pretty into the bargain. It pained us that she was compelled,

after bitter struggles, endless disputes, scenes and tears, to agree to forego her tree for the duration

Fortunately—or should I say unfortunately?—this was almost the only aspect of the war that was brought home to my aunt. The bunker my uncle built was really bombproof, in addition a car was always ready to whisk my Aunt Milla away to places where nothing was to be seen of the immediate effects of war. Everything was done to spare her the sight of the horrible ruins. My two cousins had the good fortune not to see military service in its harshest form. Johannes at once entered my uncle's firm, which played an essential part in the wholesale grocery business of our city. Besides, he suffered from gall bladder trouble. Franz on the other hand became a soldier, but he was only engaged in guarding prisoners, a post which he exploited to the extent of making himself unpopular with his military superiors by treating Russians and Poles like human beings. My Cousin Lucie was not yet married at that time and helped with the business. One afternoon a week she did voluntary war work, embroidering swastikas. But this is not the place to recite the political sins of my relations.

On the whole, then, there was no lack of money or food or reasonable safety, and my aunt's only sorrow was the absence of her tree. My Uncle Franz, that good, kind man, had for almost fifty years rendered invaluable service by purchasing oranges and lemons in tropical and sub-tropical countries and selling them at an appropriate profit. During the war he extended his business to less valuable fruits and to vegetables. After the war, however, the principal objects of his interest became popular once more under the name of citrus fruits and caused sharp competition in business circles. Here Uncle Franz succeeded once more in playing a decisive role by introducing the populace to a taste for vitamins and himself to a sizable fortune. He was almost seventy by that time, however, and wanted to retire and leave the business to his son-in-law. It was then that the event took place which made us smile at the time but which we now recognize as the cause of the whole affair.

My Aunt Milla began again with her Christmas tree. That was harmless in itself, even the tenacity with which she insisted that everything should be "as it used to be" only caused us to smile. At first there was really no reason to take the matter too seriously. To be sure, the war had caused much havoc which it was our duty to put right, but why—so we asked ourselves—deprive a charming old lady of this small joy?

Everyone knows how hard it was at that time to get butter and bacon. And even for my Uncle Franz, who had the best connections, it was impossible in the year 1945 to procure marzipan figures and chocolate rings. It was not until 1946 that everything could be made ready. Fortunately a complete set of gnomes and anvils as well as an angel had been preserved.

I still clearly remember the day on which we were invited. It was in

January '47 and it was cold outside But at my uncle's it was warm and there was no lack of delicacies When the lights were turned out and the candles lighted, when the gnomes began to hammer and the angel whispered "Peace, peace," I had a vivid feeling of being restored to a time that I had assumed was gone forever

This experience, however, though surprising was not extraordinary The extraordinary thing was what happened three months later My mother—it was now the middle of March—sent me over to find out whether "there was anything doing" with Uncle Franz She needed fruit I wandered into the neighboring quarter—the air was mild and it was twilight Unsuspecting, I walked past the overgrown piles of ruins and the untended parks, turned in at the gate to my uncle's garden and suddenly stopped in amazement In the evening quiet I could distinctly hear someone singing in my uncle's living room Singing is a good old German custom, and there are lots of spring songs—but here I clearly heard

*Unto us a child is born!  
The King of all creation*

I must admit I was confused Slowly I approached and waited for the end of the song The curtains were drawn and so I bent down to the keyhole At that moment the tinkling of the gnomes' bells reached my ear, and I distinctly heard the angel whispering

I did not have the courage to intrude, and walked slowly home My report caused general merriment in the family, and it was not until Franz turned up and told us the details that we discovered what had happened

In our region Christmas trees are dismantled at Candlemas and are then thrown on the rubbish heap where good-for-nothing children pick them up, drag them through ashes and other debris and play all sorts of games with them This was the time when the dreadful thing happened On Candlemas Eve after the tree had been lighted for the last time, and Cousin Johannes began to unfasten the gnomes from their clamps, my aunt who had hitherto been so gentle set up a dreadful screaming, so loud and sudden that my cousin was startled, lost control of the swaying tree, and in an instant it was all over, there was a tinkling and ringing, gnomes and bells, anvils and angel, everything pitched down, and my aunt screamed

She screamed for almost a week Neurologists were summoned by telegram, psychiatrists came rushing up in taxicabs—but all of them, even the specialists, left with a shrug of the shoulders and a faint expression of dread

No one could put an end to this thrill and maddening concert Only the strongest drugs provided a few hours' rest, and the dose of Luminal that one can daily prescribe for a woman in her sixties without endangering her life is, alas, slight But it is anguish to have a woman in the house

screaming with all her might on the second day the family was completely disorganized Even the consolation of the priest, who was accustomed to attend the celebration on Holy Eve, remained unavailing my aunt screamed

Franz made himself particularly unpopular by advising that a regular exorcism be performed The minister rebuked him, the family was alarmed by his medieval views, and his reputation for brutality eclipsed for several weeks his reputation as a boxer

Meanwhile everything was tried to cure my aunt's ailment She refused nourishment, did not speak, did not sleep, cold water was tried, hot water, foot baths, alternate cold and hot baths, the doctors searched the lexicons for the name of this complex but could not find it And my aunt screamed She screamed until my Uncle Franz—that really kind, good man—hit on the idea of putting up a new Christmas tree

### III

The idea was excellent, but to carry it out proved extremely hard It was now almost the middle of February, and to find a presentable fir tree in the market at that time is naturally difficult The whole business world has long since turned with happy alacrity to other things Carnival time is near masks, pistols, cowboy hats and fanciful gypsy headgear fill the shop windows where angels and angel hair, candles and mangers, were formerly on view In the candy stores Christmas items have long since gone back to the storeroom, while fireworks now adorn the windows Nowhere in the regular market is a fir tree to be found

Finally an expedition of rapacious grandchildren was fitted out with pocket money and a sharp hatchet They rode to the state forest and came back toward evening, obviously in the best of spirits, with a silver fir But meanwhile it was discovered that four gnomes, six bell-shaped anvils and the crowning angel had been completely destroyed The marzipan figures and the cookies had fallen victim to the rapacious grandchildren This coming generation, too, is worthless, and if any generation was ever of any worth—which I doubt—I am slowly coming to the belief that it was the generation of our fathers

Although there was no lack of cash or the necessary connections, it took four days more before the decorations were complete Meanwhile my aunt screamed uninterruptedly Messages to the German centers of the toy business, which were just then resuming operations, were dispatched by wireless, hurried telephone conversations were carried on, packages were delivered in the night by heated young postal employees, an import license from Czechoslovakia was obtained, by bribery, without delay

These days will stand out in the chronicle of my uncle's family by reason of the extraordinary consumption of coffee, cigarettes and nervous

energy Meanwhile my aunt fell into a decline her round face became harsh and angular, her expression of kindness changed to one of unalterable severity, she did not eat, she did not drink, she screamed constantly, she was attended by two nurses, and the dose of Luminal had to be increased daily

Franz told us that the whole family was in the grip of a morbid tension when finally, on the twelfth of February, the decoration of the Christmas tree was at last completed The candles were lighted, the curtains were drawn, my aunt was brought out from her sickroom, and in the family circle there was only the sound of sobs and giggles My aunt's expression relaxed at the sight of the candles, and when the heat had reached the proper point and the glass gnomes began to pound like mad and finally the angel, too, whispered "Peace, peace," a beautiful smile illuminated her face Shortly thereafter everyone began to sing "O Tannenbaum" To complete the picture, they had invited the minister, whose custom it was to spend Christmas Eve at my Uncle Franz's, he, too, smiled, he too was relieved and joined in the singing

What no test, no psychological opinion, no expert search for hidden traumas had succeeded in doing, my uncle's sympathetic heart had accomplished This good, kind man's Christmas-tree therapy had saved the situation

My aunt was reassured and almost—so they hoped at the time—cured After more songs had been sung and several plates of cookies had been emptied, everyone was tired and went to bed And, imagine, my aunt slept without sedatives The two nurses were disrussed, the doctors shrugged their shoulders, and everything seemed in order My aunt ate again, drank again, was once more kind and amiable

But the following evening at twilight, when my uncle was reading his newspaper beside his wife under the tree, she suddenly touched him gently on the arm and said "Now we will call the children for the celebration I think it's time" My uncle admitted to us later that he was startled, but he got up and hastily summoned his children and grandchildren and dispatched a messenger for the minister The latter appeared, somewhat distraught and amazed, the candles were lighted, the gnomes hammered away, the angel whispered, there was singing and eating—and everything seemed in order

Now all vegetation is subject to certain biological laws, and fir trees torn from the soil have a well-known tendency to wilt and lose their needles, especially if they are kept in a warm room, and in my uncle's house it was warm The life of the silver fir is somewhat longer than that of the common variety, as the well-known work *Abies Vulgaris and Abies Nobilis* by Doctor Hergenring has shown But even the life of the silver fir is not unlimited As Carnival approached it became clear that my aunt

would have to be prepared for a new sorrow the tree was rapidly losing its needles, and at the evening singing a slight frown appeared on her forehead. On the advice of a really outstanding psychologist an attempt was made in light, casual conversation to warn her of the possible end of the Christmas season, especially as the trees outside were now covered with leaves, which is generally taken as a sign of approaching spring whereas in our latitudes the word Christmas connotes wintry scenes. My resourceful uncle proposed one evening that the songs "All the birds are now assembled" and "Come, lovely May" should be sung, but at the first verse of the former such a scowl appeared on my aunt's face that the singers quickly broke off and intoned "O Tannenbaum." Three days later my cousin Johannes was instructed to undertake a quiet dismantling operation, but as soon as he stretched out his hand and took the cork hammer from one of the gnomes my aunt broke into such violent screaming that the gnome was immediately given back his implement, the candles were lighted and somewhat hastily but very loudly everyone began to sing "Silent Night."

But the nights were no longer silent, groups of singing, youthful revelers streamed through the city with trumpets and drums, everything was covered with streamers and confetti, masked children crowded the streets, fired guns, screamed, some sang as well, and a private investigation showed that there were at least sixty thousand cowboys and forty thousand gypsy princesses in our city in short it was Carnival, a holiday that is celebrated in our neighborhood with as much enthusiasm as Christmas or even more. But my aunt seemed blind and deaf she deplored the carnival costumes that inevitably appeared at this time in the wardrobes of our household, in a sad voice she lamented the decline of morals that caused people even at Christmas to indulge in such disgraceful practices, and when she discovered a toy balloon in Lucie's bedroom, a balloon that had, to be sure, collapsed but nevertheless clearly showed a white fool's cap painted on it, she broke into tears and besought my uncle to put an end to these unholy activities.

They were forced to realize with horror that my aunt actually believed it was still Christmas Eve. My uncle called a family council, requested consideration for his wife in view of her extraordinary state of mind, and at once got together an expedition to insure that at least the evening celebration would be peacefully maintained.

While my aunt slept the decorations were taken down from the old tree and placed on a new one, and her state of health continued to be satisfactory.

Carnival, too, went by, spring came for fair, instead of "Come Lovely May" one might properly have sung "Lovely May, Thou Art Here." June

arrived Four Christmas trees had already been discarded and none of the newly summoned doctors could hold out hope of improvement My aunt remained firm Even that internationally famous authority, Doctor Bless, had returned to his study, shrugging his shoulders, after having pocketed an honorarium in the sum of 1365 marks, thereby demonstrating once more his complete unworldliness A few tentative attempts to put an end to the celebration or to intermit it were greeted with such outcries from my aunt that these sacrileges had to be abandoned once and for all

The dreadful thing was that my aunt insisted that all those closest to her must be present Among these were the minister and the grandchildren Even the members of the family could only be compelled by extreme severity to appear punctually, with the minister it was even more difficult For some weeks he kept it up without protest, out of consideration for his aged pensioner, but then he attempted, clearing his throat in embarrassment, to make it clear to my uncle that this could not go on The actual celebration was short—it lasted only about thirty-eight minutes—but even this brief ceremonial, the minister maintained, could not be kept up indefinitely He had other obligations, evening conferences with his confratres, duties connected with his cure of souls, not to mention his regular Saturday confessional He agreed, however, to some weeks' continuance, but toward the end of May, he began energetic attempts to escape Franz stormed about, seeking accomplices in the family for his plan to have his mother put in an institution Everyone turned him down

And yet difficulties continued One evening the minister was missing and could not be located either telephonically or by messenger, and it became evident that he had simply skipped out My uncle swore horribly and took the occasion to describe the servants of the Church in words I must decline to repeat In this extremity one of the chaplains, a man of humble origin, was requested to help out He did so, but behaved so abominably that it almost resulted in a catastrophe However, one must bear in mind that it was June and therefore hot, nevertheless the curtains were drawn to give at least an illusion of wintry twilight and in addition the candles had been lighted Then the celebration began The chaplain had, to be sure, heard of this extraordinary event but had no proper idea of it There was general apprehension when he was presented to my aunt as the minister's substitute Unexpectedly she accepted this change in the program Well then, the gnomes hammered, the angel whispered, "O Tannenbaum" was sung, then there was the eating of cookies, more singing, and suddenly the chaplain was overcome by a paroxysm of laughter Later he admitted that it was the line "in winter, too, when snow is falling" that had been too much for him to endure without laughing He burst out with clerical tactlessness, left the room and was seen no more All looked at my aunt apprehensively, but she only murmured resignedly



something about "proletarians in priest's robes" and put a piece of marzipan in her mouth. We too deplored this event at the time—but today I am inclined to regard it as an outbreak of quite natural hilarity.

Here I must remark, if I am to be true to the facts, that my uncle exploited his connection with the highest Church authorities to lodge a complaint against both the minister and the chaplain. The matter was taken up with utmost correctness, proceedings were instituted on the grounds of neglect of pastoral duty, and in the first instance the two clergymen were exonerated. Further proceedings are in preparation.

Fortunately a pensioned prelate was found in the neighborhood. This charming old gentleman agreed, with amiable matter-of-factness, to hold himself in readiness daily for the evening celebration. But I am anticipating. My Uncle Franz, who was sensible enough to realize that no medical aid would be of avail and who stubbornly refused to try exorcism, was also a good enough businessman to plan economies for the long haul. First of all, by mid-June, the grandchildren's expeditions were stopped because they proved too expensive. My resourceful Cousin Johannes, who was on good terms with all branches of the business world, discovered that Soderbaum and Company were in a position to provide fresh fir trees. For almost two years now this firm has done noble service in sparing my relations' nerves. At the end of six months Soderbaum and Company substantially reduced their charges and agreed to have the period of delivery determined most precisely by their conifer specialist Doctor Alfast, so that three days before the old tree became unrepresentable a new one would be delivered and could be decorated at leisure. As an additional precaution two dozen gnomes and three crowning angels were kept constantly in reserve.

To this day the candies remain a sore point. They show a disturbing tendency to melt and drip down from the tree more quickly and completely than wax, at any rate in the summer months. Every effort to preserve them by carefully concealed refrigeration has thus far come to grief, as has a series of attempts to substitute artificial decorations. The family remains, however, gratefully receptive toward any proposal that might result in reducing the costs of this continuing festival.

#### IV

Meanwhile the daily celebrations in my uncle's house have taken on an almost professional regularity. People assemble under the tree or around the tree. My aunt comes in, the candles are lighted, the gnomes begin to hammer and the angel whispers "Peace, peace," songs are sung, cookies are nibbled, there is a little conversation and then everyone retires, yawning and murmuring "Merry Christmas to you, too." The young people turn to the forms of diversion dictated by the season, while my good, kind

Uncle Franz goes to bed when Aunt Milla does. The smoke of the candles lingers in the room, there is the mild aroma of heated fir needles and the smell of spices. The gnomes, slightly phosphorescent, remain motionless in the darkness, their arms raised threateningly, and the angel can be seen in his silvery robes which are obviously phosphorescent too.

Perhaps it is superfluous to state that in our whole family circle the enjoyment of the real Christmas Eve has suffered a considerable diminution. We can, if we like, admire a classical Christmas tree at our uncle's at any time—and it often happens when we are sitting on the veranda in summertime after the toil and trouble of the day, pouring my uncle's mild orange punch down our throats, that the soft tinkling of glass bells comes to us and we can see in the twilight the gnomes hammering away like spry little devils while the angel whispers "Peace, peace." And it is still disconcerting to hear my uncle in mid-summer suddenly whisper to his children "Please light the tree, Mother will be right out." Then, usually on the dot, the prelate enters, a kindly old gentleman whom we have all taken to our hearts because he plays his role so admirably, if indeed he knows that he is playing one. But no matter he plays it, white-haired, smiling, with the violet band beneath his collar giving his appearance the final touch of distinction. And it gives one an extraordinary feeling on a mild summer evening to hear the excited cry "The snuffer, quick, where is the snuffer?" It has even happened during severe thunderstorms that the gnomes have been suddenly impelled to lift their arms without the agency of heat and swing them wildly as though giving a special performance—a phenomenon that people have tried, rather unimaginatively, to explain by the prosaic word "electricity."

A by no means inessential aspect of this arrangement is the financial one. Even though in general our family suffers no lack of cash, such extraordinary expenses upset all calculations. For naturally, despite precautions, the breakage of gnomes, anvils, and hammers is enormous, and the delicate mechanism that causes the angel to speak requires constant care and attention and must now and again be replaced. I have, incidentally, discovered its secret: the angel is connected by a cable with a microphone in the adjoining room, in front of whose metal snout there is a constantly rotating phonograph record which, at proper intervals, whispers "Peace, peace." All these things are the more costly because they are designed for use on only a few occasions during the year, whereas with us they are subjected to daily wear and tear. I was astounded when my uncle told me one day that the gnomes actually had to be replaced every three months, and that a complete set of them cost no less than 128 marks. He said he had requested an engineering friend of his to try strengthening them by a rubber covering without spoiling the beauty of the tone. This experiment was unsuccessful. The consumption of candles, butter-and-almond cookies, marzipan, the regular payments for the trees, doctor's

bills and the quarterly honorarium that has to be given to the prelate, altogether, said my uncle, come to an average daily expense of 11 marks, not to mention the nervous wear and tear and other disturbances of health that began to appear in the fall of the first year. These upsets were generally ascribed, at the time, to that autumnal sensibility that is always noticeable.

The real Christmas celebration went off quite normally. Something like a sigh of relief ran through my uncle's family when other families could be seen gathered under Christmas trees, others too had to sing and eat butter-and-almond cookies. But the relief lasted only as long as the Christmas holidays. By the middle of January my Cousin Lucie began to suffer from a strange ailment: at the sight of Christmas trees lying on the streets and on rubbish heaps she broke into hysterical sobs. Then she had a real attack of insanity which the family tried to discount as a nervous breakdown. At a coffee party in a friend's house she struck a dish out of her hostess' hand as the latter was smilingly offering her butter-and-almond cookies. My cousin is, to be sure, what is called a temperamental woman and so she struck the dish from her friend's hand, went up to the Christmas tree, tore it from its stand and trampled on the glass balls, the artificial mushrooms, the candles and the stars, the while emitting a continuous roar. The assembled ladies fled, including the hostess. They let Lucie rage, and stood waiting for the doctor in the vestibule, forced to give ear to the sound of crashing china within. Painful though it is for me, I must report that Lucie was taken away in a straitjacket.

Sustained hypnotic treatment checked her illness, but the actual cure proceeded very slowly. Above all, release from the evening celebration, which the doctor demanded, seemed to do her visible good, after a few days she began to brighten. At the end of ten days the doctor could risk at least talking to her about butter-and-almond cookies, although she stubbornly persisted in refusing to eat them. The doctor then struck on the inspired idea of feeding her some sour pickles and offering her salads and nourishing meat dishes. That was poor Lucie's real salvation. She laughed once more and began to interject ironic observations into the endless therapeutic interviews she had with her doctor.

To be sure, the vacancy caused by her absence from the evening celebration was painful to my aunt, but it was explained to her by a circumstance that is an adequate excuse in any woman's eyes—pregnancy.

But Lucie had created what is called a precedent: she had proved that although my aunt suffered when someone was absent, she did not immediately begin to scream, and now my Cousin Johannes and his brother-in-law Carl attempted to infringe on the severe regulations, giving sickness as excuse or business appointments or some other quite transparent pretext. But here my uncle remained astonishingly inflexible: with iron severity he decreed that only in exceptional cases upon presentation of accept-

able evidence could very short leaves of absence be permitted For my aunt noticed every further dereliction at once and broke into silent but continuing tears, which gave rise to the most serious apprehensions

At the end of four weeks Lucie, too, returned and said she was ready to take part once more in the daily ceremony, but her doctor had insisted that a jar of pickles and a platter of nourishing sandwiches should be held in readiness, since her butter-and-almond trauma had proved incurable Thus for a time, through my uncle's unexpected severity, all breaches of discipline were suppressed

Shortly after the first anniversary of the daily Christmas celebration, disquieting rumors began to circulate my Cousin Johannes was said to have consulted a doctor friend of his about my aunt's life expectancy, a truly sinister rumor which throws a disturbing light on a peaceful family's evening gatherings The doctor's opinion is said to have been crushing for Johannes All my aunt's vital organs, which had always been sound, were in perfect condition, her father's age at the time of his death had been seventy-eight, and her mother's eighty-six My aunt herself is sixty-two, and so there is no reason to prophesy an early passing Still less reason, I consider, to wish for one After this when my aunt fell ill in midsummer—the poor woman suffered from vomiting and diarrhea—it was hinted that she had been poisoned, but I expressly declare here and now that this rumor was simply the invention of evil-minded relations The trouble was clearly shown to have been caused by an infection brought into the house by one of the grandchildren Moreover, analyses that were made of my aunt's stools showed not the slightest traces of poison

That same summer Johannes gave the first evidences of anti-social inclinations he resigned from the singing circle and gave notice in writing that he planned to take no further part in the cultivation of the German song It is only fair for me to add, however, that, despite the academic distinctions he had won, he was always an uncultivated man For the "Virhymnia" the loss of his bass voice was a serious matter

My brother-in-law Carl began secretly to consult travel agencies The land of his dreams had to have unusual characteristics no fir trees must grow there and their importation must be forbidden or rendered unfeasible by a high tariff, besides—on his wife's account—the secret of preparing butter-and-almond cookies must be unknown and the singing of German Christmas songs forbidden by law Carl declared himself ready to undertake hard physical labor

Since then he has been able to dispense with secrecy because of a complete and very sudden change which has taken place in my uncle This happened at such a disagreeable level that we have really had cause to be disconcerted The sober citizen, of whom it could be said that he was as stubborn as he was good and kind, was observed performing actions that are neither more nor less than immoral and will remain so as long

as the world endures Things became known about him, testified to by witnesses, that can only be described by the word adultery And the most dreadful thing is that he no longer denies them, but claims for himself the right to live in circumstances and in relationships that make special legislation seem justifiable Awkwardly enough, this sudden change became evident just at the time when the second hearing of the two parish priests was called My Uncle Franz seems to have made such a deplorable impression as a witness, as disguised plaintiff indeed, that it must be ascribed to him alone that the second hearing turned out favorably for the two priests But in the meantime all this had become a matter of indifference to Uncle Franz his downfall is complete, already accomplished

He too was the first to hit upon the shocking idea of having himself represented by an actor at the evening celebration He had found an unemployed *bon vivant* who for two weeks imitated him so admirably that not even his wife noticed the impersonation Nor did his children notice it either It was one of the grandchildren who, during a pause in the singing, suddenly shouted "Grandpapa has on socks with rings," and triumphantly raised the *bon vivant's* trouser leg This scene must have been terrifying for the poor artist, the family, too, was upset and to avoid disaster struck up a song, as they had done so often before in critical situations After my aunt had gone to bed, the identity of the artist was quickly established It was the signal for almost complete collapse

However one must bear in mind that a year and a half is a long time, and it was mid-summer again the time when participation in the play is hardest on my relations Listless in the heat, they nibble at sand tarts and ginger cookies, smile vacantly while they crack dried-out nuts, listen to the indefatigable hammering of the gnomes and wince when the rosy-cheeked angel above their heads whispers "Peace, peace" But they carry on while despite their summer clothing, sweat streams down their cheeks and necks and soaks their shirts Or rather they have carried on so far

For the moment money plays no part—almost the reverse People are beginning to whisper that Uncle Franz has adopted business methods, too, which can hardly be described as those of a "Christian businessman" He is determined not to allow any material lessening of the family fortune, a resolution that both calms and alarms us

The unmasking of the *bon vivant* led to a regular mutiny, as a result of which a compromise was reached Uncle Franz agreed to pay the expenses of a small theatrical troupe which would replace him, Johannes, my brother-in-law Carl, and Lucie, and it was further understood that one of the four would always take part in person in the evening celebration in order to keep the children in check Up till now the prelate has not noticed this deception, which can hardly be described as pious Aside from my aunt and the children, he is the only original figure still in the play

An exact schedule has been worked out which, in the family circle, is

known as the operational program, and thanks to the provision that one of them is always present in person, the actors too are allowed certain vacations. Meanwhile it was observed that the latter were not averse to the celebration and were glad to earn some additional money, thus it was possible to reduce their wages, since fortunately there is no lack of unemployed actors. Carl tells me that there is reason to hope that these "salaries" can be reduced still more, especially as the actors are given a meal and it is well known that art becomes cheaper when food is involved.

I have already briefly mentioned Lucie's unhappy history now she spends almost all her time in night spots and, on those days when she is compelled to take part in the household celebration, she is beside herself. She wears corduroy britches, colored pullovers, runs around in sandals and she has cut off her splendid hair in order to wear unbecoming bangs and a coiffure that I only recently discovered was once considered modern—it is known as a pony-tail. Although I have so far been unable to observe any overt immorality on her part, but only a kind of exultation, which she herself describes as existentialism, nevertheless I cannot regard this development as desirable, I prefer quiet women, who move decorously to the rhythm of the waltz, know how to recite agreeable verses and whose nourishment is not exclusively sour pickles and goulash seasoned with paprika. My brother-in-law Carl's plans to emigrate seem on the point of becoming a reality—he has found a country, not far from the equator, which seems to answer his requirements, and Lucie is full of enthusiasm, in this country people wear clothes not unlike hers, they love sharp spices and they dance to those rhythms without which she maintains life is no longer possible for her. It is a little shocking that these two do not plan to obey the command "Abide in the land I have given you," but on the other hand I can understand their desire to flee.

Things are worse with Johannes. Unfortunately the evil rumor has proved true—he has become a Communist. He has broken off all relations with the family, pays no attention to anything and takes part in the evening celebration only in the person of his double. His eyes have taken on a fanatical expression, he makes public appearances behaving like a dervish at party meetings, neglects his practice and writes furious articles in the appropriate journals. Strangely enough he now sees more of Franz, who is vainly trying to convert him—and vice versa. Despite all their spiritual estrangement, they seem personally to have grown somewhat closer.

Franz I have not seen in a long time, but I have had news of him. He is said to have fallen into a profound depression, to spend his time in dim churches, and I believe that his piety can be fairly described as exaggerated. After the family misfortunes began he started to neglect his calling, and recently I saw on the wall of a ruined house a faded poster saying "Last Battle of our Veteran Lenz against Lecoq. Lenz is Hanging up the

Gloves" The date on the poster was March, and now we are well into August Franz is said to have fallen on bad times I believe he finds himself in a situation which has never before occurred in our family he is poor Fortunately he has remained single, and so the social consequences of his irresponsible piety harm only him He has tried with amazing perseverance to have a guardian appointed for Lucie's children because he considers they are endangered by the daily celebration But his efforts have remained fruitless, thank God, the children of wealthy people are not exposed to the interference of social institutions

The one least removed from the rest of the family circle is, for all his deplorable actions, Uncle Franz To be sure, despite his advanced years, he has a mistress And his business practices, too, are of a sort that we admire, to be sure, but cannot at all approve Recently he has appointed an unemployed stage manager to supervise the evening celebration and see that everything runs like clockwork Everything does in fact run like clockwork

## V

Almost two years have now gone by—a long time And I could not resist the temptation, during one of my evening strolls, to stop in at my uncle's house, where no true hospitality is any longer possible, since strange actors wander about every evening and the members of the family have devoted themselves to reprehensible pleasures It was a mild summer evening, and as I turned into the avenue of chestnut trees I heard the verse

*The wintry woods are clad in snow*

A passing truck made the rest inaudible Slowly and softly I approached the house and looked through a crack in the curtains The similarity of the actors who were present to those of my relations whom they represented was so startling that for an instant I could not recognize which one this evening was the superintendent, as they called him I could not see the gnomes but I could hear them Their chirping tinkle has a wave length that can penetrate any wall The whispering of the angel was inaudible My aunt seemed to be really happy she was chatting with the prelate, and it was only later that I recognized my brother-in-law as the one real person present—if that is the right word I recognized him by the way he rounded and pointed his lips as he blew out a match Apparently there are unchangeable individual traits This led me to reflect that the actors, too, were obviously treated to cigars, cigarettes and wine—in addition there was asparagus every evening If their appetites were shameless—and what artist's is not?—this meant a considerable additional ex-

pense for my uncle The children were playing with dolls and wooden wagons in a corner of the room They looked pale and tired Perhaps one really ought to have some consideration for them I was struck by the idea that they might perhaps be replaced by wax dolls of the kind one sees in the windows of drugstores as advertisements for powdered milk and skin lotions It seems to me those look quite natural

As a matter of fact I intend to call the family's attention to the possible effect on the children's temperament of this unnatural daily excitement Although a certain amount of discipline does no harm, it seems to me that they are being subjected to excessive demands

I left my observation post when the people inside began to sing "Silent Night" I simply could not bear the song The air was so mild—and for an instant I had the feeling that I was watching an assembly of ghosts Suddenly I had a craving for sour pickles and this gave me some inkling of how very much Lucie must have suffered

I have now succeeded in having the children replaced by wax dolls Their procurement was costly—Uncle Franz hesitated for some time—but one really could not go on irresponsibly feeding the children on marzipan every day and making them sing songs which in the long run might cause them psychic injury The procurement of the dolls proved to be useful because Carl and Lucie really emigrated and Johannes also withdrew his children from his father's household I bade farewell to Carl and Lucie and the children as they stood amid large traveling trunks They seemed happy, if a little worried Johannes, too, has left our town Somewhere or other he is engaged in reorganizing a Communist cell

Uncle Franz is weary of life Recently he complained to me that people are always forgetting to dust off the dolls His servants in particular cause him difficulties, and the actors seem inclined to be undisciplined They drink more than they ought, and some of them have been caught filling their pockets with cigars and cigarettes I advised my uncle to provide them with colored water and cardboard cigars

The only reliable ones are my aunt and the prelate They chat together about the good old times, giggle and seem to enjoy themselves, interrupting their conversation only when a song is struck up

In any event, the celebration goes on

My cousin Franz has taken an amazing step He has been accepted as a lay brother in a nearby monastery When I saw him for the first time in a cowl I was startled that large figure, with broken nose, thickened lips and melancholy expression, reminded me more of a prisoner than a monk He seemed almost to have read my thoughts "Life is a prison sentence," he said softly I followed him into the interview room We conversed haltingly, and he was obviously relieved when the bell summoned him to the



chapel for prayers I remained behind, thoughtful, as he departed he went in a great hurry, and his haste seemed genuine

(*Translated from the German by Denver Lindley*)

## COMMENT

"The minute fungi of destruction have found lodgement beneath the hard, thick crust of respectability, colonies of deadly parasites that proclaim the end of a whole tribe's irreproachable correctness" With this sentence in the opening paragraph Boll announces the general theme of his story, the breakdown of the middle-class order. The breakdown is reinforced by the setting, that of Germany from the time of Hitler, through the Second World War, to the present. But although an author may wish to write about an entire society, he does so through particular persons—here Aunt Milla, who has a literal breakdown which leads to the demoralization of her family—indeed, of *the* family, the central institution of the middle class.

As the passage quoted indicates, "Christmas Every Day" has a clear symbolic intention, like "Babylon Revisited." But we are struck more by the differences between the two stories. What strikes us at once about Boll's story is its unusual action, like that which concludes "The Judgment." Where Fitzgerald's action is the kind any one of us might well go through, Boll's is more appropriate to a madhouse than to a well-to-do middle-class family. This difference between their symbolic presentations may be put in another way. They begin from opposite points. Fitzgerald begins with a naturalistic surface and builds up his symbols through clusters of detail—the process is cumulative, Boll begins with his strange, immediately symbolic action, which he then endows with a naturalistic surface. He does not expect us to take his story literally, but his surface is so natural as to give the illusion of verisimilitude.

There are two overriding symbols in the story, the daily ritual celebration and the decorated Christmas trees. Taking the trees first, we may look at the decorations as a clue to their meanings. For example, the angels do not have a spiritual but a "mechanical secret," indicating the mechanical spirit of modern worship. They also suggest a naive, prettified notion of the nature and role of heavenly spirits, this naivete is likewise evident in the mere presence of gnomes, a pagan element. But the meaning is also in the way the trees and decorations were secured. At first, connections and outright bribery were used, later, a regular business arrangement was instituted to cut costs—all this linking the practice of religion to commercialism and corruption. The meaning of a symbol lies also in what happens to it, thus the wilting trees in the summer indicate the changing attitude towards them.

The most dramatic symbol is the daily celebration. Ordinarily a conventional religious symbol, like the trees, it is used unconventionally, non-naturally here. As a non-natural symbol the daily celebration is imposed on the natural order of things, considerably distorting that order. Being

itself a symbolic act, but a yearly one, it represents when celebrated daily a dramatic breakdown of the symbol and what it stands for. It symbolizes a desperate attempt to restore things to what they were in the "good old times" that Aunt Milla and the senile prelate continually, compulsively talk about. But we know the services are a mockery of the real thing, reflecting the empty content not only of middle-class religion but also of middle-class life in general. Thus the turns to Communism and existentialism by Johannes and Lucie symbolize attempts to find new faiths. And thus, too, Cousin Franz's entry as a lay brother in a monastery is a symbolic repudiation of modern, comfortable Christianity for a harsher kind. For him, "Life is a prison sentence," not a pagan, gaudy, sugared celebration.

## QUESTIONS ON SYMBOLISM

1 The symbolism of both the trees and the daily celebration undoubtedly goes beyond our interpretation. The different attitudes toward the decorations might be considered, also, the meaning of the actors and the stage manager, and the contrast between their loss of discipline and the old prelate's maintenance of it.

2 How else does Boll suggest a link between business and religion?

3 What is the significance of the pagan Carnival?

4 As we have said, the full meaning of a symbol is in what happens to it, in its full career. What are the changes that take place in the celebration, in the trees, and in the people?

5 Why does the family object to Cousin Franz as a boxer? Why do they withdraw their objection when he becomes famous? What is the connection between his boxing and his "pious fiddle-faddle"?

6 What recurrences, imagery, and contrasts does Boll use?

7 Other highly symbolic stories are "Death in Venice," "Grace," "Powerhouse," and "Young Goodman Brown." Are their symbols natural, non-natural, or supernatural? Does the symbolic vision in each heighten or diminish the sense of reality?

## *Other Considerations*

1 Boll's style is simple, his tone matter-of-fact. How do these affect the unusual subject matter? Would a more complicated style and a more heightened tone—like Poe's—have been more effective?

2 Boll's use of irony is central to the success of his story, suggesting as it does the many shades of ambiguity necessary to convey the full meaning. Any thorough examination of the story should consider this at some length. What, for example, is the irony in the repeated description of Uncle Franz as a "good, kind man"? in the mechanical angels' repeated "Peace, peace"?

3 Perhaps the principal ironic device is the use of the first-person narrator. Is he, for example, innocent of the ironic and comic develop-

ments? If so, what advantage is there in his innocence? How does his point of view help to refine our sense of the others? Does he himself undergo any change?

4 The ironic spirit and the comic spirit are both critical, and often identical. Would you say this is a comic, even a howlingly funny story? If it is funny, is it in bad taste?

5 What are some of the structural ironies in the story?

6 Unlike the usual chronological arrangement of plot, the action begins at the conclusion of the story. What is the effect of this? Is suspense sacrificed? Consider the effect of Mann's cut-back to the past in "Death in Venice."

# Stories



An old woman named Mary Wiggins got three goose-eggs from a neighbour in order to hatch a clutch of goslings. She put an old clucking hen over the eggs in a wooden box with a straw bed. The hen proved to be a bad sitter. She was continually deserting the eggs, possibly because they were too big. The old woman then kept her shut up in the box. Either through weariness, want of air or simply pure devilment, the hen died on the eggs, two days before it was time for the shells to break.

The old woman shed tears of rage, both at the loss of her hen, of which she was particularly fond, and through fear of losing her goslings. She put the eggs near the fire in the kitchen, wrapped up in straw and old clothes. Two days afterwards, one of the eggs broke and a tiny gosling put out its beak. The other two eggs proved not to be fertile. They were thrown away.

The little gosling was a scraggy thing, so small and so delicate that the old woman, out of pity for it, wanted to kill it. But her husband said, 'Kill nothing that is born in your house, woman alive. It's against the law of God.'

"It's a true saying, my honest fellow," said the old woman. "What comes into the world is sent by God. Praised be He."

For a long time it seemed certain that the gosling was on the point of death. It spent all the day on the hearth in the kitchen, nestling among the peat ashes, either sleeping or making little tweezy noises. When it was offered food, it stretched out its beak and pecked without rising off its stomach. Gradually, however, it became hardier and went out of doors to sit in the sun, on a flat rock. When it was three months it was still a yellowish colour with soft down, even though other goslings of that age in the village were already going to the pond with the flock and able to flap their wings and join in the cackle at evening time, when the setting sun was being saluted. The little gosling was not aware of the other geese, even though it saw them rise on windy days and fly with a great noise from their houses to the pond. It made no effort to become a goose, and at four months of age it still could not stand on one leg.

The old woman came to believe that it was a fairy. The village women agreed with her after some dispute. It was decided to tie pink and red ribbons around the gosling's neck and to sprinkle holy water on its wing feathers.

That was done and then the gosling became sacred in the village. No

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boy dare throw a stone at it, or pull a feather from its wing, as they were in the habit of doing with geese, in order to get masts for the pieces of cork they floated in the pond as ships. When it began to move about, every house gave it dainty things. All the human beings in the village paid more respect to it than they did to one another. The little gosling had contracted a great affection for Mary Wiggins and followed her round everywhere, so that Mary Wiggins also came to have the reputation of being a woman of wisdom. Dreams were brought to her for unravelling. She was asked to set the spell of the Big Periwinkle and to tie the Knot of the Snakes on the sides of sick cows. And when children were ill, the gosling was brought secretly at night and led three times around the house on a thin halter of horsehair.

When the gosling was a year old it had not yet become a goose. Its down was still slightly yellowish. It did not cackle, but made curious tweezy noises. Instead of stretching out its neck and hissing at strangers, after the manner of a proper goose, it put its head to one side and made funny noises like a duck. It meditated like a hen, was afraid of water and cleansed itself by rolling on the grass. It fed on bread, fish and potatoes. It drank milk and tea. It amused itself by collecting pieces of cloth, nails, small fish-bones and the limpet-shells that are thrown in a heap beside dung-hills. These pieces of refuse it placed in a pile to the left of Mary Wiggins's door. And when the pile was tall, it made a sort of nest in the middle of it and lay in the nest.

Old Mrs. Wiggins had by now realized that the goose was worth money to her. So she became firmly convinced that the goose was gifted with supernatural powers. She accepted, in return for setting spells, a yard of white frieze cloth for unravelling dreams, a pound of sugar for setting the spell of the Big Periwinkle and half a donkey's load of potatoes for tying the Knot of the Snakes on a sick cow's side. Hitherto a kindly, humorous woman, she took to wearing her shawl in triangular fashion, with the tip of it reaching to her heels. She talked to herself or to her goose as she went along the road. She took long steps like a goose and rolled her eyes occasionally. When she cast a spell she went into an ecstasy, during which she made inarticulate sounds, like "boum, roum, toum, kroum."

Soon it became known all over the countryside that there was a woman of wisdom and a fairy goose in the village, and pilgrims came secretly from afar, at the dead of night, on the first night of the new moon, or when the spring tide had begun to wane.

The men soon began to raise their hats passing old Mary Wiggins's house, for it was understood, owing to the cure of Dara Foddy's cow, that the goose was indeed a good fairy and not a malicious one. Such was the excitement in the village and all over the countryside, that what was kept secret so long at last reached the ears of the parish priest.

The story was brought to him by an old woman from a neighbouring village to that in which the goose lived. Before the arrival of the goose, the other old woman had herself cast spells, not through her own merits but through those of her dead mother, who had a long time ago been the

woman of wisdom in the district. The priest mounted his horse as soon as he heard the news and galloped at a break-neck speed towards Mary Wiggins's house, carrying his breviary and his stole. When he arrived in the village he dismounted at a distance from the house, gave his horse to a boy and put his stole around his neck.

A number of the villagers gathered and some tried to warn Mary Wiggins by whistling at a distance, but conscious that they had all taken part in something forbidden by the sacred laws of orthodox religion, they were afraid to run ahead of the priest into the house. Mary Wiggins and her husband were within, making little ropes of brown horsehair which they sold as charms.

Outside the door, perched on her high nest, the little goose was sitting. There were pink and red ribbons around her neck and around her legs there were bands of black tape. She was quite small, a little more than half the size of a normal, healthy goose. But she had an elegant charm of manner, an air of civilization, and a consciousness of great dignity, which had grown out of the love and respect of the villagers.

When she saw the priest approach, she began to cackle gently, making the tweeky noise that was peculiar to her. She descended from her perch and waddled towards him, expecting some dainty gift. But instead of stretching out his hand to offer her something and saying, "Beadai, beadai, come here," as was customary, the priest halted and muttered something in a harsh, frightened voice. He became red in the face and he took off his hat.

Then for the first time in her life the little goose became terrified. She opened her beak, spread her wings and lowered her head. She began to hiss violently. Turning around, she waddled back to her nest, flapping her wings and raising a loud cackle, just like a goose, although she had never been heard to cackle loudly like a goose before. Clambering up on her high nest, she lay there, quite flat, trembling violently.

The bird, never having known fear of human beings, never having been treated with discourtesy, was so violently moved by the extraordinary phenomenon of a man wearing black clothes, scowling at her and muttering, that her animal nature was roused and showed itself with disgusting violence.

The people watching this scene were astounded. Some took off their caps and crossed themselves. For some reason it was made manifest to them that the goose was an evil spirit and not the good fairy which they had supposed her to be. Terrified of the priest's stole and of his breviary and of his scowling countenance, they were only too eager to attribute the goose's strange hissing and her still stranger cackle to supernatural forces of an evil nature. Some present even caught a faint rumble of thunder in the east, and although it was not noticed at the time, an old woman later asserted that she heard a great cackle of geese afar off, raised in answer to the fairy goose's cackle.

"It was," said the old woman, "certainly the whole army of devils offering her help to kill the holy priest."



The priest turned to the people and cried, raising his right hand in a threatening manner

"I wonder the ground doesn't open up and swallow you all idolaters!"

"O father, blessed by the hand of God," cried an old woman, the one who later asserted she had heard the devilish cackle afar off. She threw herself on her knees in the road, crying "Spare us, father."

Old Mrs. Wiggins, having heard the strange noises, rushed out into the yard with her triangular shawl trailing and her black hair loose. She began to make vague, mystic movements with her hands, as had recently become a habit with her. Lost in some sort of ecstasy, she did not see the priest at first. She began to chant something

"You hag," cried the priest, rushing up the yard towards her menacingly

The old woman caught sight of him and screamed. But she faced him boldly

"Come no farther," she cried, still in an ecstasy, either affected, or the result of a firm belief in her own mystic powers

Indeed, it is difficult to believe that she was not in earnest, for she used to be a kind, gentle woman

Her husband rushed out, crying aloud. Seeing the priest, he dropped a piece of rope he had in his hand and fled around the corner of the house

"Leave my way, you hag," cried the priest, raising his hand to strike her

"Stand back," she cried "Don't lay a hand on my goose"

"Leave my way," yelled the priest, "or I'll curse you"

"Curse, then," cried the unfortunate woman "Curse!"

Instead, the priest gave her a blow under the ear, which felled her smartly. Then he strode up to the goose's nest and seized the goose. The goose, paralyzed with terror, was just able to open her beak and hiss at him. He stripped the ribbons off her neck and tore the tape off her feet. Then he threw her out of the nest. Seizing a spade that stood by the wall, he began to scatter the refuse of which the nest was composed

The old woman, lying prostrate in the yard, raised her head and began to chant in the traditional fashion, used by the women of wisdom

"I'll call on the winds of the east and of the west, I'll raise the winds of the sea. The lightning will flash in the sky and there'll be great sounds of giants warring in the heavens. Blight will fall on the earth and calves with fishes' tails will be born of cows."

The little goose, making tweezy noises, waddled over to the old woman and tried to hide herself under the long shawl. The people murmured at this, seeing in it fresh signs of devilry

Then the priest threw down the spade and hauled the old woman to her feet, kicking aside the goose. The old woman, exhausted by her ecstasy and possibly seeking to gain popular support, either went into a faint or feigned one. Her hands and her feet hung limply. Again the people murmured. The priest, becoming embarrassed, put her sitting against the wall. Then he didn't know what to do, for his anger had exhausted his reason. He either became ashamed of having beaten an old woman, or he

felt the situation was altogether ridiculous. So he raised his hand and addressed the people in a sorrowful voice.

‘Let this be a warning,’ he said sadly. ‘This poor woman and all of you, led astray by foolish and Avarice is at the back of this,’ he cried suddenly in an angry voice, shaking his fist. ‘This woman has been preying on your credulity, in order to extort money from you by her pretended sorcery. That’s all it is. Money is at the back of it. But I give you warning. If I hear another word about this, I’ll —’

He paused uncertainly, wondering what to threaten the poor people with. Then he added

‘I’ll report it to the Archbishop of the diocese.’

The people raised a loud murmur, asking forgiveness.

‘Fear God,’ he added finally, ‘and love your neighbours.’

Then, throwing a stone angrily at the goose, he strode out of the yard and left the village.

It was then the people began to curse violently and threaten to burn the old woman’s house. The responsible people among them, however, chiefly those who had hitherto paid no respect to the superstition concerning the goose, restrained their violence. Finally the people went home and Mary Wiggins’s husband, who had been hiding in a barn, came and brought his wife indoors. The little goose, uttering cries of amazement, began to collect the rubbish once more, piling it in a heap in order to rebuild her nest. That night, just after the moon had risen, a band of young men collected, approached Mary Wiggins’s house and enticed the goose from her nest, by calling, ‘Beadai, beadai, come here, come here.’

The little goose, delighted that people were again kind and respectful to her, waddled down to the gate, making happy noises.

The youths stoned her to death.

And the little goose never uttered a sound, so terrified and amazed was she at this treatment from people who had formerly loved her and whom she had never injured.

Next morning, when Mary Wiggins discovered the dead carcass of the goose, she went into a fit, during which she cursed the village, the priest, and all mankind.

And indeed it appeared that her blasphemous prayer took some effect at least. Although giants did not war in the heavens and though cows did not give birth to fishes, it is certain that from that day the natives of that village are quarrelsome drunkards, who fear God but do not love one another. And the old woman is again collecting followers from among the wives of the drunkards. These women maintain that the only time in the history of their generation that there was peace and harmony in the village was during the time when the fairy goose was loved by the people.

A well-fed, red cheeked young man called Nikolay Ilyitch Belyaev, of thirty-two, who was an owner of house property in Petersburg, and a devotee of the race-course, went one evening to see Olga Ivanovna Irnin, with whom he was living, or, to use his own expression, was dragging out a long, wearisome romance. And, indeed, the first interesting and enthusiastic pages of this romance had long been perused, now the pages dragged on, and still dragged on, without presenting anything new or of interest.

Not finding Olga Ivanovna at home, my hero lay down on the lounge chair and proceeded to wait for her in the drawing room.

"Good-evening, Nikolay Ilyitch!" he heard a child's voice. "Mother will be here directly. She has gone with Sonia to the dressmaker's."

Olga Ivanovna's son, Alyosha—a boy of eight who looked graceful and very well cared for, who was dressed like a picture, in a black velvet jacket and long black stockings—was lying on the sofa in the same room. He was lying on a satin cushion and, evidently imitating an acrobat he had lately seen at the circus, stuck up in the air first one leg and then the other. When his elegant legs were exhausted, he brought his arms into play or jumped up impulsively and went on all fours, trying to stand with his legs in the air. All this he was doing with the utmost gravity, gasping and groaning painfully as though he regretted that God had given him such a restless body.

"Ah, good-evening, my boy," said Belyaev. "It's you! I did not notice you. Is your mother well?"

Alyosha, taking hold of the tip of his left toe with his right hand and falling into the most unnatural attitude, turned over, jumped up, and peeped at Belyaev from behind the big fluffy lampshade.

"What shall I say?" he said, shrugging his shoulders. "In reality mother's never well. You see, she is a woman, and women, Nikolay Ilyitch, have always something the matter with them."

Belyaev, having nothing better to do, began watching Alyosha's face. He had never before during the whole of his intimacy with Olga Ivanovna paid any attention to the boy, and had completely ignored his existence,

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the boy had been before his eyes, but he had not cared to think why he was there and what part he was playing

In the twilight of the evening, Alyosha's face, with his white forehead and black, unblinking eyes, unexpectedly reminded Belyaev of Olga Ivanovna as she had been during the first pages of their romance. And he felt disposed to be friendly to the boy.

"Come here, insect," he said, "let me have a closer look at you."

The boy jumped off the sofa and skipped up to Belyaev.

"Well," began Nikolay Ilyitch, putting a hand on the boy's thin shoulder, "How are you getting on?"

"How shall I say! We used to get on a great deal better."

"Why?"

"It's very simple. Sonia and I used only to learn music and reading, and now they give us French poetry to learn. Have you been shaved lately?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I see you have. Your beard is shorter. Let me touch it. Does that hurt?"

"No."

"Why is it that if you pull one hair it hurts, but if you pull a lot at once it doesn't hurt a bit? Ha, ha! And, you know, it's a pity you don't have whiskers. Here ought to be shaved, but here at the sides the hair ought to be left."

The boy nestled up to Belyaev and began playing with his watch-chain.

"When I go to the high-school," he said, "mother is going to buy me a watch. I shall ask her to buy me a watch-chain like this. What a locket! Father's got a locket like that, only yours has little bars on it and his has letters. There's mother's portrait in the middle of his. Father has a different sort of chain now, not made with rings, but like ribbon."

"How do you know? Do you see your father?"

"I? M'm no I."

Alyosha blushed, and in great confusion, feeling caught in a lie, began zealously scratching the locket with his nail. Belyaev looked steadily into his face and asked:

"Do you see your father?"

"N-no!"

"Come, speak frankly, on your honour. I see from your face you are telling a fib. Once you've let a thing slip out it's no good wriggling about it. Tell me, do you see him? Come, as a friend."

Alyosha hesitated.

"You won't tell mother?" he said.

"As though I should!"

"On your honour?"

"On my honour."

"Do you swear?"

"Ah, you provoking boy! What do you take me for?"

Alyosha looked round him, then with wide-open eyes, whispered to him  
 "Only, for goodness' sake, don't tell mother Don't tell any one  
 at all, for it is a secret I hope to goodness mother won't find out, or  
 we should all catch it—Sonia, and I, and Pelagea Well, listen  
 Sonia and I see father every Tuesday and Friday When Pelagea takes us  
 for a walk before dinner we go to the Apfel Restaurant, and there is father  
 waiting for us He is always sitting in a room apart, where you know  
 there's a marble table and an ash-tray in the shape of a goose without  
 a back "

"What do you do there?"

"Nothing! First we say how-do-you-do, then we all sit round the table,  
 and father treats us with coffee and pies You know Sonia eats the meat-  
 pies, but I can't endure meat-pies! I like the pies made of cabbage and  
 eggs We eat such a lot that we have to try hard to eat as much as we  
 can at dinner, for fear mother should notice "

"What do you talk about?"

"With father? About anything He kisses us, he hugs us, tells us all  
 sorts of amusing jokes Do you know, he says when we are grown up he  
 is going to take us to live with him Sonia does not want to go, but I agree  
 Of course, I should miss mother, but, then, I should write her letters!  
 It's a queer idea, but we could come and visit her on holidays—couldn't  
 we? Father says, too, that he will buy me a horse He's an awfully kind  
 man! I can't understand why mother does not ask him to come and live  
 with us, and why she forbids us to see him You know he loves mother  
 very much He is always asking us how she is and what she is doing  
 When she was ill he clutched his head like this, and and kept running  
 about He always tells us to be obedient and respectful to her Listen, Is  
 it true that we are unfortunate?"

"H'm! Why?"

"That's what father says 'You are unhappy children,' he says It's  
 strange to hear him, really 'You are unhappy,' he says, 'I am unhappy,  
 and mother's unhappy You must pray to God,' he says, 'for yourselves  
 and for her ' "

Alyosha let his eyes rest on a stuffed bird and sank into thought

"So " growled Belyaev "So that's how you are going on You arrange  
 meetings at restaurants And mother does not know?"

"No-o How should she know? Pelagea would not tell her for any-  
 thing, you know The day before yesterday he gave us some pears As  
 sweet as jam! I ate two "

"H'm! Well, and I say Listen Did father say anything about  
 me?"

"About you? What shall I say?"

Alyosha looked searchingly into Belyaev's face and shrugged his shoul-  
 ders

"He didn't say anything particular "

"For instance, what did he say?"

"You won't be offended?"

"What next? Why, does he abuse me?"

"He doesn't abuse you, but you know he is angry with you. He says mother's unhappy owing to you and that you have ruined mother. You know he is so queer! I explain to him that you are kind, that you never scold mother, but he only shakes his head."

"So he says I have ruined her?"

"Yes, you mustn't be offended, Nikolay Ilyitch."

Belyaev got up, stood still a moment, and walked up and down the drawing-room.

"That's strange and ridiculous!" he muttered, shrugging his shoulders and smiling sarcastically. "He's entirely to blame, and I have ruined her, eh? An innocent lamb, I must say. So he told you I ruined your mother?"

"Yes, but you said you would not be offended, you know."

"I am not offended, and it's not your business. Why, it's why, it's positively ridiculous! I have been thrust into it like a chicken in the broth, and now it seems I'm to blame!"

A ring was heard. The boy sprang up from his place and ran out. A minute later a lady came into the room with a little girl, this was Olga Ivanovna, Alyosha's mother. Alyosha followed them in, skipping and jumping, humming aloud and waving his hands. Belyaev nodded, and went on walking up and down.

"Of course, whose fault is it if not mine?" he muttered with a snort. "He is right! He is an injured husband."

"What are you talking about?" asked Olga Ivanovna.

"What about? Why, just listen to the tales your lawful spouse is spreading now! It appears that I am a scoundrel and a villain, that I have ruined you and the children. All of you are unhappy, and I am the only happy one! Wonderfully, wonderfully happy!"

"I don't understand, Nikolay. What's the matter?"

"Why, listen to this young gentleman!" said Belyaev, pointing to Alyosha.

Alyosha flushed crimson, then turned pale, and his whole face began working with terror.

"Nikolay Ilyitch," he said in a loud whisper. "Sh-sh!"

Olga Ivanovna looked in surprise at Alyosha, then at Belyaev, then at Alyosha again.

"Just ask him," Belyaev went on. "Your Pelagea, like a regular fool, takes them about to restaurants and arranges meetings with their papa. But that's not the point. The point is that their dear papa is a victim, while I'm a wretch who has broken up both your lives."

"Nikolay Ilyitch," moaned Alyosha. "Why, you promised on your word of honour!"

"Oh, get away!" said Belyaev, waving him off. "This is more important than any word of honour. It's the hypocrisy revolts me, the lying!"

"I don't understand it," said Olga Ivanovna, and tears glistened in her eyes "Tell me, Alyosha," she turned to her son "Do you see your father?"

Alyosha did not hear her, he was looking with horror at Belyaev

"It's impossible," said his mother, 'I will go and question Pelagea "

Olga Ivanovna went out

"I say, you promised on your word of honour!" said Alyosha, trembling all over

Belyaev dismissed him with a wave of his hand, and went on walking up and down He was absorbed in his grievance and was oblivious of the boy's presence, as he always had been He, a grownup, serious person, had no thought to spare for boys And Alyosha sat down in the corner and told Sonia with horror how he had been deceived He was trembling, stammering and crying It was the first time in his life that he had been brought into such coarse contact with lying, till then he had not known that there are in the world, besides sweet pears, pies, and expensive watches, a great many things for which the language of children has no expression

Mrs William Trimble and Miss Rebecca Wright were driving along Hampden east road, one afternoon in early spring. Their progress was slow. Mrs Trimble's sorrel horse was old and stiff, and the wheels were clogged by clay mud. The frost was not yet out of the ground, although the snow was nearly gone, except in a few places on the north side of the woods, or where it had drifted all winter against a length of fence.

"There must be a good deal o' snow to the nor'ard of us yet," said weather-wise Mrs Trimble. "I feel it in the air, 't is more than the ground-damp. We ain't goin' to have real nice weather till the upcountry snow's all gone."

"I heard say yesterday that there was good sleddin' yet, all up through Parsley," responded Miss Wright. "I shouldn't like to live in them northern places. My cousin Ellen's husband was a Parsley man, an' he was obliged, as you may have heard, to go up north to his father's second wife's funeral, got back day before yesterday. 'T was about twenty-one miles, an' they started on wheels, but when they'd gone nine or ten miles, they found 't was no sort o' use, an' left their wagon an' took a sleigh. The man that owned it charged 'em four an' six, too. I shouldn't have thought he would, they told him they was goin' to a funeral, an' they had their own buffaloes an' everything."

"Well, I expect it's a good deal harder scratchin', up that way, they have to git money where they can, the farms is very poor as you go north," suggested Mrs Trimble kindly. "'T ain't none too rich a country where we be, but I've always been grateful I wa'n't born up to Parsley."

The old horse plodded along, and the sun, coming out from the heavy spring clouds, sent a sudden shine of light along the muddy road. Sister Wright drew her large veil forward over the high brim of her bonnet. She was not used to driving, or to being much in the open air, but Mrs Trimble was an active business woman, and looked after her own affairs herself, in all weathers. The late Mr Trimble had left her a good farm, but not much ready money, and it was often said that she was better off in the end than if he had lived. She regretted his loss deeply, however, it was impossible for her to speak of him, even to intimate friends, without emotion, and nobody had ever hinted that this emotion was insincere. She was most warm-hearted and generous, and in her limited way played the part of Lady Bountiful in the town of Hampden.

"Why, there's where the Bray girls lives, ain't it?" she exclaimed, as,



beyond a thicket of witch-hazel and scrub-oak, they came in sight of a weather-beaten, solitary farmhouse. The barn was too far away for thrift or comfort, and they could see long lines of light between the shrunken boards as they came nearer. The fields looked both stony and sodden. Somehow, even Parsley itself could be hardly more forlorn.

"Yes'm," said Miss Wright, "that's where they live now, poor things. I know the place, though I ain't been up here for years. You don't suppose, Mis Trimble—I ain't seen the girls out to meetin' all winter. I've re'lly been covetin'—"

"Why, yes, Rebecca, of course we could stop," answered Mrs. Trimble heartily. "The exercises was over earlier 'n I expected, an' you're goin' to remain over night long o' me, you know. There won't be no tea till we git there, so we can't be late. I'm in the habit o' sendin' a basket to the Bray girls when any o' our folks is comin' this way, but I ain't been to see 'em since they moved up here. Why, it must be a good deal over a year ago. I know 't was in the late winter they had to make the move. 'T was cruel hard, I must say, an' if I hadn't been down with my pleurisy fever I'd have stirred round an' done somethin' about it. There was a good deal o' sickness at the time, an'—well, 't was kind o' rushed through, breakin' of 'em up, an' lots o' folks blamed the selec'men but when 't was done, 't was done, an' nobody took holt to undo it. Ann an' Mandy looked same 's ever when they come to meetin', 'long in the summer,—kind o' wishful, perhaps. They've always sent me word they was gittin' on pretty comfortable."

"That would be their way," said Rebecca Wright. "They never was any hand to complain, though Mandy's less cheerful than Ann. If Mandy'd been spared such poor eyesight, an' Ann hadn't got her lame wrist that wa'n't set right, they'd kep' off the town fast enough. They both shed tears when they talked to me about havin' to break up, when I went to see 'em before I went over to brother Asa's. You see we was brought up neighbors, an' we went to school together, the Brays an' me. 'T was a special Providence brought us home this road, I've been so covetin' a chance to git to see 'em. My lameness hampers me."

"I'm glad we come this way, myself," said Mrs. Trimble.

"I'd like to see just how they fare," Miss Rebecca Wright continued. "They give their consent to goin' on the town because they knew they'd got to be dependent, an' so they felt 't would come easier for all than for a few to help 'em. They acted real dignified an' right-minded, contrary to what most do in such cases, but they was dreadful anxious to see who would bid 'em off, town-meeting day, they did so hope 't would be somebody right in the village. I just sat down an' cried good when I found Abel Janes's folks had got hold of 'em. They always had the name of bein' slack an' poor-spirited, an' they did it just for what they got out o' the town. The selectmen this last year ain't what we have had. I hope they've been considerate about the Bray girls."

"I should have be'n more considerate about fetchin' of you over," apologized Mrs. Trimble. "I've got my horse, an' you're lame-footed, t

is too far for you to come But time does slip away with busy folks, an' I forgit a good deal I ought to remember'

"There's nobody more considerate than you be," protested Miss Rebecca Wright

Mrs Trimble made no answer, but took out her whip and gently touched the sorrel horse, who walked considerably faster, but did not think it worth while to trot It was a long, round-about way to the house, farther down the road and up a lane

"I never had any opinion of the Bray girls' father, leavin' 'em as he did," said Mrs Trimble

"He was much praised in his time, though there was always some said his early life hadn't been up to the mark," explained her companion "He was a great favorite of our then preacher, the Reverend Daniel Longbrother They did a good deal for the parish but they did it their own way Deacon Bray was one that did his part in the repairs without urging You know 't was in his time the first repairs was made, when they got out the old soundin'-board an' them handsome square pews It cost an awful sight o' money, too They hadn't done payin' up that debt when they set to alter it again an' git the walls frescoed My grandmother was one that always spoke her mind right out, an' she was dreadful opposed to breakin' up the square pews where she'd always set They was countin' up what 't would cost in parish meetin', an' she riz right up an' said 't wouldn't cost nothin' to let 'em stay, an' there wa'n't a house carpenter left in the parish that could do such nice work, an' time would come when the great-grandchildren would give their eye-teeth to have the old meetin'-house look just as it did then But haul the inside to pieces they would and did"

"There come to be a real fight over it, didn't there?" agreed Mrs Trimble soothingly "Well, 't wa'n't good taste I remember the old house well I come here as a child to visit a cousin o' mother's, an' Mr Trimble's folks was neighbors, an' we was drawed to each other then, young 's we was Mr Trimble spoke of it many's the time,—that first time he ever see me, in a leghorn hat with a feather, 't was one that mother had, an' pressed over"

"When I think of them old sermons that used to be preached in that old meetin'-house of all, I'm glad it's altered over, so's not to remind folks," said Miss Rebecca Wright, after a suitable pause Them old brimstone discourses, you know, Mis' Trimble Preachers is far more reasonable, nowadays Why, I set an' thought, last Sabbath, as I listened, that if old Mr Longbrother an' Deacon Bray could hear the difference they'd crack the ground over 'em like pole beans, an' come right up 'long side their headstones"

Mrs Trimble laughed heartily, and shook the reins three or four times by way of emphasis "There's no gitting round you," she said, much pleased "I should think Deacon Bray would want to rise, any way, if 't was so he could, an' knew how his poor girls was farin' A man ought to provide for his folks he's got to leave behind him, specially if they're women To be sure, they had their little home, but we've seen how, with

all their industrious ways, they hadn't means to keep it. I s'pose he thought he'd got time enough to lay by, when he give so generous in collections, but he didn't lay by, an' there they be. He might have took lessons from the squirrels even them little wild creatur's makes them their winter hoards, an' menfolks ought to know enough if squirrels does. 'Be just before you are generous' that's what was always set for the B's in the copy-books, when I was to school, and it often runs through my mind."

"'As for man, his days are as grass,'—that was for A, the two go well together," added Miss Rebecca Wright soberly. "My good gracious, an' t'his a starved-lookin' place? It makes me ache to think them nice Bray girls has to brook it here."

The sorrel horse, though somewhat puzzled by an unexpected deviation from his homeward way, willingly came to a stand by the gnawed corner of the door-yard fence, which evidently served as hitching-place. Two or three ragged old hens were picking about the yard, and at last a face appeared at the kitchen window, tied up in a handkerchief as if it were a case of toothache. By the time our friends reached the side door next this window, Miss Janes came disconsolately to open it for them, shutting it again as soon as possible, though the air felt more chilly inside the house.

"Take seats," said Mrs. Janes briefly. "You'll have to see me just as I be. I have been suffering these four days with the ague, and everything to do. Mr. Janes is to court, on the jury. I was inconvenient to spare him. I should be pleased to have you lay off your things."

Comfortable Mrs. Trimble looked about the cheerless kitchen, and could not think of anything to say, so she smiled blandly and shook her head in answer to the invitation. "We'll just set a few minutes with you, to pass the time o' day, an' then we must go in an' have a word with the Miss Brays, bein' old acquaintance. It ain't been so we could git to call on 'em before. I don't know 's you're acquainted with Miss Rebecca Wright. She's been out of town a good deal."

"I heard she was stopping over to Plainfields with her brother's folks," replied Mrs. Janes, rocking herself with irregular motion, as she sat close to the stove. "Got back some time in the fall, I believe?"

"Yes'm," said Miss Rebecca, with an undue sense of guilt and conviction. "We've been to the installation over to the East Parish, an' thought we'd stop in, we took this road home to see if 't was any better. How is the Miss Brays gettin' on?"

"They're well's common," answered Mrs. Janes grudgingly. "I was put out with Mr. Janes for fetchin' of 'em here, with all I've got to do, an' I own I was kind o' surly to 'em 'long to the first of it. He gits the money from the town, an' it helps him out but he bid 'em off for five dollars a month, an' we can't do much for 'em at no such price as that. I went an' dealt with the selec'men, an' made 'em promise to find their firewood an' some other things extra. They was glad to get rid o' the matter the fourth time I went, an' would ha' promised 'most anything. But Mr. Janes don't keep me half the time in oven-wood, he's off so much, an' we was cramped

o' room, any way I have to store things up garrit a good deal, an' that keeps me trampin' right through their room I do the best for 'em I can, Mis Trimble, but 't ain't so easy for me as 't is for you, with all your means to do with "

The poor woman looked pinched and miserable herself, though it was evident that she had no gift at house or home keeping Mrs Trimble's heart was wrung with pain, as she thought of the unwelcome inmates of such a place but she held her peace bravely, while Miss Rebecca again gave some brief information in regard to the installation

You go right up them back stairs," the hostess directed at last "I'm glad some o' you church folks has seen fit to come an' visit 'em There ain't been nobody here this long spell, an they've aged a sight since they come They always send down a taste out of your baskets, Mis' Trimble, an' I relish it, I tell you I'll shut the door after you, if you don't object I feel every draught o' cold air "

"I've always heard she was a great hand to make a poor mouth Wa n't she from somewheres up Parsley way?" whispered Miss Rebecca, as they stumbled in the half-light

"Poor meechin' body, wherever she come from," replied Mrs Trimble, as she knocked at the door

There was silence for a moment after this unusual sound, then one of the Bray sisters opened the door The eager guests stared into a small, low room, brown with age, and gray, too, as if former dust and cobwebs could not be made wholly to disappear The two elderly women who stood there looked like captives Their withered faces wore a look of apprehension, and the room itself was more bare and plain than was fitting to their evident refinement of character and self-respect There was an uncovered small table in the middle of the floor, with some crackers on a plate, and, for some reason or other, this added a great deal to the general desolation

But Miss Ann Bray, the elder sister, who carried her right arm in a sling, with piteously drooping fingers, gazed at the visitors with radiant joy She had not seen them arrive

The one window gave only the view at the back of the house, across the fields, and their coming was indeed a surprise The next minute she was laughing, and crying together Oh, sister!" she said, "if here ain't our dear Mis' Trimble!—an' my heart o' goodness, 't is 'Becca Wright, too! What dear good creatur's you be! I've felt all day as if something good was goin' to happen, an' was just sayin' to myself 't was most sundown now, but I wouldn't let on to Mandany I'd give up hope quite yet You see, the scissors stuck in the floor this very mornin' an' it's always a reliable sign There, I've got to kiss ye both again!"

I don't know where we can all set," lamented sister Mandana "There ain't but the one chair an' the bed, t' other chair's too rickety, an' we've been promised another these ten days, but first they've forgot it, an' next Mis' Janes can't spare it,—one excuse an' another I am goin' to git a stump o' wood an' nail a board on to it, when I can git outdoor again," said Mandana, in a plaintive voice "There, I ain't goin' to complain o' nothin',

now you've come," she added, and the guests sat down, Mrs Trimble, as was proper, in the one chair

"We've sat on the bed many's the time with you, 'Becca, an' talked over our girl nonsense, ain't we? You know where 't was—in the little back bedroom we had when we was girls, an' used to peek out at our beaux through the strings o' mornin'-glories," laughed Ann Bray delightedly, her thin face shining more and more with joy "I brought some o' them mornin'-glory seeds along when we come away, we'd raised 'em so many years, an' we got 'em started all right, but the hens found 'em out I declare I chased them poor hens, foolish as 't was, but the mornin'-glories I'd counted on a sight to remind me o' home You see, our debts was so large, after my long sickness an' all, that we didn't feel 't was right to keep back anything we could help from the auction "

It was impossible for any one to speak for a moment or two, the sisters felt their own uprooted condition afresh, and their guests for the first time really comprehended the piteous contrast between that neat little village house, which now seemed a palace of comfort, and this cold, unpainted upper room in the remote Janes farmhouse It was an unwelcome thought to Mrs Trimble that the well-to-do town of Hampden could provide no better for its poor than this, and her round face flushed with resentment and the shame of personal responsibility "The girls shall be well settled in the village before another winter, if I pay their board myself," she made an inward resolution, and took another almost tearful look at the broken stove, the miserable bed, and the sisters' one hair-covered trunk, on which Mandana was sitting But the poor place was filled with a golden spirit of hospitality

Rebecca was again discoursing eloquently of the installation, it was so much easier to speak of general subjects, and the sisters had evidently been longing to hear some news Since the late summer they had not been to church, and presently Mrs Trimble asked the reason

"Now, don't you go to pouring out our woes, Mandy!" begged little old Ann, looking shy and almost girlish, and as if she insisted upon playing that life was still all before them and all pleasure "Don't you go to spoilin' their visit with our complaints! They know well's we do that changes must come, an' we'd been so wanted to our home things that this come hard at first, but then they felt for us, I know just as well's can be 'T will soon be summer again, an' 't is real pleasant right out in the fields here, when there ain't too hot a spell I've got to know a sight o' singin' birds since we come "

"Give me the folks I've always known," sighed the younger sister, who looked older than Miss Ann, and less even-tempered "You may have your birds, if you want 'em I do re'lly long to go to meetin' and see folks go by up the aisle Now, I will speak of it, Ann, whatever you say We need, each of us, a pair o' good stout shoes an' rubbers,—ours are all wore out, an' we've asked an' asked, an' they never think to bring 'em, an'—"

Poor old Mandana, on the trunk, covered her face with her arms and sobbed aloud The elder sister stood over her, and patted her on the thin

shoulder like a child, and tried to comfort her. It crossed Mrs. Trimble's mind that it was not the first time one had wept and the other had comforted. The sad scene must have been repeated many times in that long, drear winter. She would see them forever after in her mind as fixed as a picture, and her own tears fell fast.

"You didn't see Mis' Janes's cunning little boy, the next one to the baby, did you?" asked Ann Bray, turning round quickly at last, and going cheerfully on with the conversation. 'Now, hush, Mandy, dear, they'll think you're childish! He's a dear, friendly little creatur', an' likes to stay with us a good deal, though we feel 's if it was too cold for him, now we are waitin' to get us more wood."

"When I think of the acres o' woodland in this town!" groaned Rebecca Wright. "I believe I'm goin' to preach next Sunday, 'stead o' the minister, an' I'll make the sparks fly. I've always heard the saying, 'What's everybody's business is nobody's business,' an' I've come to believe it."

"Now, don't you, 'Becca. You've happened on a kind of a poor time with us, but we've got more belongings than you see here, an' a good large cluset, where we can store those things there ain't room to have about. You an' Mis' Trimble have happened on a kind of poor day, you know. Soon's I git me some stout shoes an' rubbers, as Mandy says, I can fetch home plenty o' little dry boughs o' pine, you remember I was always a great hand to roam in the woods? If we could only have a front room, so 't we could look out on the road an' see passin', an' was shod for meetin', I don' know's we should complain. Now we're just goin' to give you what we've got, an' make out with a good welcome. We make more tea 'n we want in the mornin', an' then let the fire go down, since 't has been so mild. We've got a *good* cluset" (disappearing as she spoke), "an' I know this to be good tea, 'cause it's some o' yourn, Mis' Trimble. An' here's our sprigged chiny cups that R'becca knows by sight, if Mis' Trimble don't. We kep' out four of 'em, an' put the even half dozen with the rest of the auction stuff. I've often wondered who'd got 'em, but I never asked, for fear 't would be somebody that would distress us. They was mother's, you know."

The four cups were poured, and the little table pushed to the bed, where Rebecca Wright still sat, and Mandana, wiping her eyes, came and joined her. Mrs. Trimble sat in her chair at the end, and Ann trotted about the room in pleased content for a while, and in and out of the closet, as if she still had much to do, then she came and stood opposite Mrs. Trimble. She was very short and small, and there was no painful sense of her being obliged to stand. The four cups were not quite full of cold tea, but there was a clean old tablecloth folded double, and a plate with three pairs of crackers neatly piled, and a small—it must be owned, a very small—piece of hard white cheese. Then, for a treat, in a glass dish, there was a little preserved peach, the last—Miss Rebecca knew it instinctively—of the household stores brought from their old home. It was very sugary, this bit of peach, and as she helped her guests and sister Mandy, Miss Ann Bray said, half unconsciously, as she often had said with less reason in the

old days, "Our preserves ain't so good as usual this year, this is beginning to candy" Both the guests protested, while Rebecca added that the taste of it carried her back, and made her feel young again. The Brays had always managed to keep one or two peach-trees alive in their corner of a garden. "I've been keeping this preserve for a treat," said her friend. "I'm glad to have you eat some, 'Becca. Last summer I often wished you was home an' could come an' see us, 'stead o' being away off to Plainfields."

The crackers did not taste too dry. Miss Ann took the last of the peach on her own cracker, there could not have been quite a small spoonful, after the others were helped, but she asked them first if they would not have some more. Then there was a silence, and in the silence a wave of tender feeling rose high in the hearts of the four elderly women. At this moment the setting sun flooded the poor plain room with light, the unpainted wood was all of a golden-brown, and Ann Bray, with her gray hair and aged face, stood at the head of the table in a kind of aureole. Mrs. Trimble's face was all aquiver as she looked at her, she thought of the text about two or three being gathered together, and was half afraid.

"I believe we ought to 've asked Mis' Janes if she wouldn't come up," said Ann. "She's real good feelin', but she's had it very hard, an' gits discouraged. I can't find that she's ever had anything real pleasant to look back to, as we have. There, next time we'll make a good heartenin' time for her too."

The sorrel horse had taken a long nap by the gnawed fence-rail, and the cool air after sundown made him impatient to be gone. The two friends jolted homeward in the gathering darkness, through the stiffening mud, and neither Mrs. Trimble nor Rebecca Wright said a word until they were out of sight as well as out of sound of the Janes house. Time must elapse before they could reach a more familiar part of the road and resume conversation on its natural level.

"I consider myself to blame," insisted Mrs. Trimble at last. "I haven't no words of accusation for nobody else, an' I ain't one to take comfort in calling names to the board o' selec'men. I make no reproaches, an' I take it all on my own shoulders, but I'm goin' to stir about me, I tell you! I shall begin early to-morrow. They're goin' back to their own house,—it's been standin' empty all winter,—an' the town's goin' to give 'em the rent an' what firewood they need, it won't come to more than the board's payin' out now. An' you an' me'll take this same horse an' wagon, an' ride an' go afoot by turns, an' git means enough together to buy back their furniture an' whatever was sold at that plaguey auction, an' then we'll put it all back, an' tell 'em they've got to move to a new place, an' just carry 'em right back again where they come from. An' don't you never tell, R'becca, but here I be a widow woman, layin' up what I make from my farm for nobody knows who, an' I'm goin' to do for them Bray girls all I'm a mind to. I should be sca't to wake up in heaven, an' hear anybody there ask how the Bray girls was. Don't talk to me about the town o' Hampden, an' don't ever let me hear the name o' town poor! I'm ashamed

to go home an' see what's set out for supper I wish I'd brought 'em right along "

"I was goin' to ask if we couldn't git the new doctor to go up an' do somethin' for poor Ann's arm," said Miss Rebecca "They say he's very smart If she could get so's to braid straw or hook rugs again, she'd soon be earnin' a little somethin' An' may be he could do somethin' for Mandy's eyes They did use to live so neat an' ladylike Somehow I couldn't speak to tell 'em there that 't was I bought them six best cups an' saucers, time of the auction, they went very low, as everything else did, an' I thought I could save it some other way They shall have 'em back an' welcome You're real whole-hearted, Mis' Trimble I expect Ann'll be sayin' that her father's child'n wa'n't goin' to be left desolate, an' that all the bread he cast on the water's comin' back through you "

"I don't care what she says, dear creatur'" exclaimed Mrs Trimble "I'm full o' regrets I took time for that installation, an' set there seepin' in a lot o' talk this whole day long, except for its kind of bringin' us to the Bray girls I wish to my heart 't was to-morrow mornin' a'ready, an' I a'startin' for the selec'men "



One evening he kissed her, and she got abruptly up from the bench in the garden back of her father's house and went to stand by a tree. How soft and still and lovely the night seemed to him! He felt absurdly set up, a little, perhaps, he thought, smiling indulgently at himself, as a warrior might feel after securing a position of advantage for a coming great battle. For the moment he had forgotten her and continued to sit alone on the bench smiling at himself. Had the stillness of the garden been broken by the blast of a trumpet and himself proclaimed some kind of a conquering male hero, he would not have been too surprised. The notion of being a conqueror clung to him, and although he laughed at himself, he went on playing with the idea. There was Napoleon following his star of destiny and Alexander sighing for more worlds to conquer! Had he not suddenly kissed her without asking permission? Had he not stormed the fortress? It was the way things were done among the bolder males. He laughed softly.

In a way she had been expecting the kiss, although she had been telling herself she did not want it. Still she was prepared for it as he was not. It was the third time they had been together.

For her the first time she had seen him had been the most stirring of all. He had come into town unheralded and then word had gone around that he was a figure of consequence in the intellectual world. He was invited to speak before an organization called the Thursday Club and she went with her father, the editor of the town's one newspaper.

His figure had swept like a flame across the field of her fancy that first evening. In what a daring way he had talked! His subject was the effect of Christianity on civilization and he spoke of Jesus, the man of Nazareth in a way that disturbed and irritated the Thursday Club. With what fire and eloquence he talked! There was the sacred young man, a carpenter in an obscure village. He had thought his own thoughts, ignored the teachings of older men. When he was not at work at his trade, he went alone to talk in the hills. His own intense nature and the long hours and days of silent contemplation of life had made him a profound mystic. Had anyone thought, had anyone dared think, of the man Jesus as just an ordinary human being who had, in the face of the commonplace standards of life, had the courage to use his life as an adventurous experiment for the benefit of society!

The speaker before the Thursday Club, organized by her father and several other men for the purpose of studying literature, had quite startled his audience. After the meeting several of the members protested, saying the club had been organized for another purpose and that it was too bad to start a religious discussion.

They had, she felt, missed the whole point of his talk. It was not a religious discussion. As she sat beside her father and looked about at the other club members and their wives and at the few unmarried men scattered among them, a great gladness that such a man had come to live in her town swept over her. As he continued talking of the man of Galilee and how he walked up and down through many towns in a faraway country casting out devils by the power of his bold and lovely presence, she was so overcome with emotion that tears came to her eyes. The speaker was himself a man of thirty, and Jesus, the Christ of whom he talked so eloquently, had been a man of thirty when he set out on his mission to civilization. After the meeting and as the speaker walked home with herself and her father, she remained silent while the two men talked. Even then he was a little too conscious of her. She had wanted to worship from afar. She had wanted to repeat aloud the words of the officers of the Pharisees, sent to seize Jesus in the temple, the men who had returned from their mission empty-handed. "Never man spake like this man," they had said, filled with wonder.

As the three people walked under the trees, he continued to speak on the subject that had been the foundation of his talk before the club. "They evidently misunderstood," he said laughing. "I did not intend my talk to be concerned with religion. I was thinking only of the barbaric background of the life of Jesus Christ and its dramatic possibilities. You understand what I mean, the soft smiling land of Galilee, the lake with the white cities on the shore, ruled over by the cruel Herod Antipas, the fishermen leaving their nets to follow the man who taught the strange new doctrine of peace, forgiveness and love. And then the strange crowds in the streets of the towns and in the city of Jerusalem, the paralytic at Bethesda, the pool by the Sheep-gate, the prostitute who wiped his feet with her hair as he sat at the feast, the scene in the garden on the night before the crucifixion, the crucifixion itself—why should all this not be taken as profound and beautiful literature? That is how, I am sure, it has had its greatest effect upon mankind."

As he had talked to her father during the walk homeward on that first evening, the speaker had occasionally turned to her and once he had made a feeble apology for the seriousness of the talk. "Does all this bore you?" he asked, and a chill ran over her body. She made a gesture with her hand and looked away, and as soon as they had arrived at her father's house, she excused herself and went upstairs.

The two men continued talking for a long time and she undressed and lay in bed with her door open so she could hear the voices. What an evening that had been for her! Her father, usually a rather prosaic man, was excited and talked well, and she thought the newcomer the most wonder-

ful being that had ever come into her consciousness. His strong boyish voice ran up the stairs and through the halls of the house and she sat up in bed and listened, her whole being strangely alive. The voice had carried her out of herself and into the land of Galilee he had described so vividly, and she stood in a vast crowd of people listening to another stranger of thirty who had suddenly come out of another place and was talking. A phrase remembered from her Bible-reading ran through her mind and she repeated it aloud. She became, not herself, but a strange woman in a strange land. "Blessed be the womb that bare Thee and the breasts that Thou hast sucked," she imagined herself shouting, quite carried away.

She saw him for the second time two weeks after that first meeting, and it was strange and also sad to think that during that second meeting he came off his pedestal with a thump.

He wrote her a note and asked her to go with him to a concert and she was stirred at the thought of sitting close beside him all evening and hearing music. Before the evening came, she went about her father's house, attending to the household affairs, with her mind floating away out of her body into a land of spiritual adventure. When her father spoke to her at the table, she was confused and her cheeks grew red. "What's the matter with you?" he asked, laughing. "You've begun acting like a schoolgirl. What's happened to you?"

After all, she was not very young and the new man was not the first who had been attracted to her. Already two men of the town had asked her to marry them—but she had never before got into such a strange exalted state. "Between him and myself it will be different. We will go along a new road into a strange beautiful place," she whispered to herself. She had no plan. It was enough, she thought, that the new man had come to town, that she could occasionally sit in silence beside him, that she could hear his voice, that she could come into the presence of his mind at work making beautiful images.

"It is quite true. There is a religion of the beautiful," she thought. Her mother, who had died when she was fifteen, had been a devout church member, and as a young girl she had also given herself, for a time, to religious enthusiasm. Later she had given up churchgoing and had thought of herself as an intellectual woman.

Now she laughed at herself. "I am a child beside him," she thought, remembering how glowingly he had talked before the Thursday Club Contentment settled down upon her. "In every life there should be a deeply spiritual love," she told herself. "I am like that woman in the Bible who on a scorching day came down alone, out of a village, to the well in the dusty plain and found lying there on a stone bench the sacred man, he who knew the true way of life."

At the concert he did several things to disturb her.

In the first place he was not at all absorbed or carried away by the music and all evening he kept looking at her with hungry eyes. As they

walked homeward he did not talk, giving himself with abandon to ideas, but was silent and self-conscious

And then he kissed her and her exalted mood went quickly away and something shrewd and determined took entire possession of her

It was ten o'clock when they got to the house and her father was at the newspaper office. The moon shone and they went into the garden and sat together on a bench. After he had kissed her, she went to stand by the tree because it was necessary for her to make a new adjustment. She had been allowing herself to be a child and her child's hands had been building a temple. Now all the bricks and stone of the temple had fallen down and there was a great dust and racket.

To relieve the tenseness of the situation she led him out of the garden into the street. After all, she had not finished with him. There was something she wanted. They walked down a silent street under trees and a group of young men went past them singing some foolish love-song.

Presently they came to the end of the street and into a field, and it was then she understood the depth of his stupidity. Some elders grew in a little gully beside the field and he wanted her to go in among them. When she drew back, a little startled, he was angry. "The kiss you let me take back there was a lie, then?" he asked sharply. "It didn't mean anything? You are like all the other women who give kisses having no meaning?"

It was during the third time they were together that everything between them was settled. A war had broken out between the forces sleeping in each of them, but after that third meeting peace came. One Saturday afternoon they went together to spend a day in the country. She wore a heavy sweater and stout boots and on his shoulder he carried a small bag filled with the luncheon she had prepared. She was in a smiling, confident mood and he was disturbed and unhappy. When he looked at her he felt like one condemned to beat with bare hands against a cold stone wall. The wall was as hard as adamant, but was surfaced with some warm soft growth.

For a time after they set out, things went well and then the final struggle between them began. Several times during the afternoon, as they walked in a little strip of woodland among dry leaves and under the fragrant trees just in the fullness of the new spring life, she seemed about to yield at the hunger gnawing at him, but, as evening came on and when they had eaten the luncheon and sat on the grassy bank of a small stream, she became very business-like and determined. "We must get back toward town before darkness comes," she said, leading the way across a field and into a dusty road.

The battle came to a crisis quickly. When they had got almost to town, her energetic mood left her and they got out of the road and into an orchard. He built a little fire of twigs beside a rail fence and they leaned against the fence and watched it burn in silence. The thin column of smoke went up through the branches of the trees. "It's like incense," she said, creeping close to him. Their bodies pressed against each other. As

the moon was full, darkness did not come and the day passed imperceptibly into night

Two boys from a nearby farmhouse, who had been driving cows homeward along a lane, saw them standing thus, their arms about each other. They crawled over a fence and crept along in the shadows to wait and watch.

Overcome by a sudden fear she pushed herself out of his arms and moved slowly away along the fence. He followed, pressing her close. A wavering uncertainty had taken possession of her and the battle seemed lost. She wanted to escape and at the same time did not want to escape. She was tired.

With an effort she turned and walked in a very determined way across the orchard and he stood by the fence and let her go. One of the farm boys called to the other. "Nothing's going to happen. She's going away," he called. The boys climbed a fence and ran off along a lane toward a distant barn and again silence settled over the orchard. She returned to him, her eyes shining and her hands trembling.

"You see what you have brought me to, what has happened?" she asked sharply. For a moment she felt mean, beaten, and then quickly she became quite sure of herself. The whole fact of organized life stood back of her trembling figure.

He did not understand. "There will be a scandal," she said. "I don't blame you. I blame myself. Why did I let myself make a show of myself with you?"

She tried to explain. "Of course those boys know me," she said, turning her face away. "They have seen us, in this place, holding each other in that way and kissing. It's light enough to see everything. It's horrible. You are a man, but I'm a woman. There'll be a scandal and my name will be dragged in the mud."

He watched her, perplexed and puzzled. The fact that they had been seen at the love-making had rather amused him and he had been on the point of breaking into laughter. Now he felt ashamed and penitent.

She went and put her face down on the top rail of the fence and her body shook with sobs. He stood awkwardly watching.

A thought came to him. "Well," he said hesitatingly, "we could marry, we could get married."

He looked away over her head and out into an open country washed with moonlight. A wind came up and clouds raced across the sky making fugitive shadows that played madly over the face of the fields. Some shadowy, lovely thing seemed fleeing out of him and out of her. He felt like a beast who in playing about at night in a forest has suddenly put his foot into a trap. A madness to run away from her, to flit half-crazily away over the fields like one of the cloud shadows and then to disappear forever into an unknown, mysterious distance, had possession of him, but his feet had become heavy. He was held fast, bound down to the earth, not by desire now, but by a strange hesitating sympathy with the thing that bound her to earth.

When she looked up, he took her into his arms and held her tightly while he continued looking over her head and into the distance. Her body that had been quivering with excitement became quiet. "We had better be married at once," he said. "There are things I have never understood before. Let's go back to town and be married at once, tonight. That will solve all our difficulties, you see."

And the will therein lieth, which dieth not Who knoweth the mysteries of the will with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness Man doth not yield himself to the angels nor unto death utterly save only through the weakness of his feeble will

JOSEPH GLANVILL

I cannot, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia Long years have since elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering Or, perhaps, I cannot *now* bring these points to mind, because, in truth, the character of my beloved, her rare learning, her singular yet placid cast of beauty, and the thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her low musical language, made their way into my heart by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive that they have been unnoticed and unknown Yet I believe that I met her first and most frequently in some large, old, decaying city near the Rhine Of her family—I have surely heard her speak That it is of a remotely ancient date cannot be doubted Ligeia! Ligeia! Buried in studies of a nature more than all else adapted to deaden impressions of the outward world, it is by that sweet word alone—by Ligeia—that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her who is no more And now, while I write, a recollection flashes upon me that I have *never known* the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed, and who became the partner of my studies, and finally the wife of my bosom Was it a playful charge on the part of my Ligeia? or was it a test of my strength of affection, that I should institute no inquiries upon this point? or was it rather a caprice of my own—a wildly romantic offering on the shrine of the most passionate devotion? I but indistinctly recall the fact itself—what wonder that I have utterly forgotten the circumstances which originated or attended it? And, indeed, if ever that spirit which is entitled *Romance*—if ever she, the wan and the misty-winged Ashtophet of idolatrous Egypt, presided, as they tell, over marriages ill-omened, then most surely she presided over mine

There is one dear topic, however, on which my memory fails me not It is the *person* of Ligeia In stature she was tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated I would in vain attempt to portray the majesty, the quiet ease, of her demeanor, or the incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her footfall She came and departed as a shadow I was never made aware of her entrance into my closed study, save by the

dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder. In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her. It was the radiance of an opium-dream—an airy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine than the fantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos. Yet her features were not of that regular mould which we have been falsely taught to worship in the classical labors of the heathen. "There is no exquisite beauty," says Bacon, Lord Verulam, speaking truly of all the forms and genera of beauty, "without some *strangeness* in the proportion." Yet, although I saw that the features of Ligeia were not of a classic regularity—although I perceived that her loveliness was indeed "exquisite," and felt that there was much of "strangeness" pervading it, yet I have tried in vain to detect the irregularity and to trace home my own perception of "the strange." I examined the contour of the lofty and pale forehead—it was faultless—how cold indeed that word when applied to a majesty so divine!—the skin rivalling the purest ivory, the commanding extent and repose, the gentle prominence of the regions above the temples, and then the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant, and naturally-curling tresses, setting forth the full force of the Homeric epithet, "hyacinthine!" I looked at the delicate outlines of the nose—and nowhere but in the graceful medallions of the Hebrews had I beheld a similar perfection. There were the same luxurious smoothness of surface, the same scarcely perceptible tendency to the aquiline, the same harmoniously curved nostrils speaking the free spirit. I regarded the sweet mouth. Here was indeed the triumph of all things heavenly—the magnificent turn of the short upper lip—the soft, voluptuous slumber of the under—the dimples which sported, and the color which spoke—the teeth glancing back, with a brilliancy almost startling, every ray of the holy light which fell upon them in her serene and placid, yet most exultingly radiant of all smiles. I scrutinized the formation of the chin—and here, too, I found the gentleness of breadth, the softness and the majesty, the fulness and the spirituality, of the Greek—the contour which the god Apollo revealed but in a dream to Cleomenes, the son of the Athenian. And then I peered into the large eyes of Ligeia.

For eyes we have no models in the remotely antique. It might have been, too, that in these eyes of my beloved lay the secret to which Lord Verulam alludes. They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race. They were even fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nourjahad. Yet it was only at intervals—in moments of intense excitement—that this peculiarity became more than slightly noticeable in Ligeia. And at such moments was her beauty—in my heated fancy thus it appeared perhaps—the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth, the beauty of the fabulous Hourî of the Turk. The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black, and, far over them, hung jetty lashes of great length. The brows, slightly irregular in outline, had the same tint. The "strangeness," however, which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the *expression*. Ah,



word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual The expression of the eyes of Ligeia! How for long hours have I pondered upon it! How have I, through the whole of a midsummer night, struggled to fathom it! What was it—that something more profound than the well of Democritus—which lay far within the pupils of my beloved? What *was* it? I was possessed with a passion to discover Those eyes! those large, those shining, those divine orbs! became to me twin stars of Leda, and I to them devoutest of astrologers

There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact—never I believe, noticed in the schools—that in our endeavors to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves *upon the very verge* of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember And thus how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia's eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression—felt it approaching—yet not quite be mine—and so at length entirely depart! And (strange, oh strangest mystery of all!) I found, in the commonest objects of the universe, a circle of analogies to that expression I mean to say that, subsequently to the period when Ligeia's beauty passed into my spirit, there dwelling as in a shrine, I derived, from many existences in the material world, a sentiment such as I felt always aroused within me by her large and luminous orbs Yet not the more could I define that sentiment, or analyze, or even steadily view it I recognized it, let me repeat, sometimes in the survey of a rapidly growing vine—in the contemplation of a moth, a butterfly, a chrysalis, a stream of running water I have felt it in the ocean, in the falling of a meteor I have felt it in the glances of unusually aged people And there are one or two stars in heaven, (one especially, a star of the sixth magnitude, double and changeable, to be found near the large star in Lyra,) in a telescopic scrutiny of which I have been made aware of the feeling I have been filled with it by certain sounds from stringed instruments, and not unfrequently by passages from books Among innumerable other instances, I well remember something in a volume of Joseph Glanvill, which (perhaps merely from its quaintness—who shall say?) never failed to inspire me with the sentiment “And the will therein lieth, which dieth not Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will ”

Length of years and subsequent reflection have enabled me to trace, indeed, some remote connection between this passage in the English moralist and a portion of the character of Ligeia An *intensity* in thought, action, or speech, was possibly, in her, a result, or at least an index, of that gigantic volition which, during our long intercourse, failed to give other and more immediate evidence of its existence Of all the women whom I have ever known, she, the outwardly calm, the ever-placid Ligeia, was the most violently a prey to the tumultuous vultures of stern passion

And of such passion I could form no estimate, save by the miraculous expansion of those eyes which at once so delighted and appalled me—by the almost magical melody, modulation, distinctness, and placidity of her very low voice—and by the fierce energy (rendered doubly effective by contrast with her manner of utterance) of the wild words which she habitually uttered

I have spoken of the learning of Ligeia it was immense—such as I have never known in women In the classical tongues was she deeply proficient, and as far as my own acquaintance extended in regard to the modern dialects of Europe, I have never known her at fault Indeed upon any theme of the most admired, because simply the most abstruse of the boasted erudition of the academy, have I *ever* found Ligeia at fault? How singularly, how thrillingly, this one point in the nature of my wife has forced itself, at this late period only, upon my attention! I said her knowledge was such as I have never known in woman—but where breathes the man who has traversed, and successfully, *all* the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science? I saw not then what I now clearly perceive, that the acquisitions of Ligeia were gigantic, were astounding, yet I was sufficiently aware of her infinite supremacy to resign myself with a child-like confidence, to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation at which I was most busily occupied during the earlier years of our marriage With how vast a triumph, with how vivid a delight, with how much of all that is ethereal in hope, did I *feel* as she bent over me in studies but little sought—but less known—that delicious vista by slow degrees expanding before me, down whose long, gorgeous, and all untrodden path, I might at length pass onward to the goal of a wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden!

How poignant, then, must have been the grief with which, after some years, I beheld my well-grounded expectations take wings to themselves and fly away! Without Ligeia I was but as a child groping benighted Her presence, her readings alone, rendered vividly luminous the many mysteries of the transcendentalism in which we were immersed Wanting the radiant lustre of her eyes, letters, lambent and golden, grew duller than Saturnian lead And now those eyes shone less and less frequently upon the pages over which I pored Ligeia grew ill The wild eyes blazed with a too—too glorious effulgence, the pale fingers became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave, and the blue veins upon the lofty forehead swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle emotion I saw that she must die—and I struggled desperately in spirit with the grim Azrael And the struggles of the passionate wife were, to my astonishment, even more energetic than my own There had been much in her stern nature to impress me with the belief that, to her, death would have come without its terrors, but not so Words are impotent to convey any just idea of the fierceness of resistance with which she wrestled with the Shadow I groaned in anguish at the pitiable spectacle I would have soothed—I would have reasoned, but, in the intensity of her wild desire for life—for life—but for life—solace and reason were alike the uttermost

of folly Yet not until the last instance, amid the most convulsive writhings of her fierce spirit, was shaken the external placidity of her demeanor Her voice grew more gentle—grew more low—yet I would not wish to dwell upon the wild meaning of the quietly uttered words My brain reeled as I hearkened, entranced, to a melody more than mortal—to assumptions and aspirations which mortality had never before known

That she loved me I should not have doubted, and I might have been easily aware that, in a bosom such as hers, love would have reigned no ordinary passion But in death only was I fully impressed with the strength of her affection For long hours, detaining my hand, would she pour out before me the overflowing of a heart whose more than passionate devotion amounted to idolatry How had I deserved to be so blessed by such confessions? How had I deserved to be so cursed with the removal of my beloved in the hour of her making them? But upon this subject I cannot bear to dilate Let me say only, that in Ligeia's more than womanly abandonment to a love, alas! all unmerited, all unworthily bestowed, I at length recognized the principle of her longing, with so wildly earnest a desire, for the life which was now fleeing so rapidly away It is this wild longing, it is this eager vehemence of desire for life—but for life, that I have no power to portray, no utterance capable of expressing

At high noon of the night in which she departed, beckoning me peremptorily to her side, she bade me repeat certain verses composed by herself not many days before I obeyed her They were these

[THE CONQUEROR WORM]

Lo! 'tis a gala night  
 Within the lonesome latter years!  
 An angel throng bewinged bedight  
 In veils and drowned in tears  
 Sit in a theatre to see  
 A play of hopes and fears  
 While the orchestra breathes fitfully  
 The music of the spheres

Mimes in the form of God on high  
 Mutter and mumble low  
 And hither and thither fly—  
 Mere puppets they who come and go  
 At bidding of vast formless things  
 That shift the scenery to and fro  
 Flapping from out their condor wings  
 Invisible Woe!

That motley drama—oh be sure  
 It shall not be forgot!  
 With its Phantom chased for evermore  
 By a crowd that seize it not  
 Through a circle that ever returneth in  
 To the self same spot,  
 And much of Madness and more of Sin,  
 And Horror the soul of the plot

But see amid the mimic rout  
 A crawling shape intrude!  
 A blood red thing that writhes from out  
 The scenic solitude!  
 It writhes—it writhes! with mortal pangs  
 The mimes become its food,  
 And seraphs sob at vermin fangs  
 In human gore imbued

Out—out are the lights—out all!  
 And over each quivering form  
 The curtain, a funeral pall  
 Comes down with the rush of a storm  
 While the angels all pallid and wan  
 Uprising unveiling affirm  
 That the play is the tragedy Man,  
 And its hero, the Conqueror Worm

“O God!” half shrieked Ligeia, leaping to her feet and extending her arms aloft with a spasmodic movement, as I made an end of these lines—  
 “O God! O Divine Father! shall these things be undeviatingly so? shall this Conqueror be not once conquered? Are we not part and parcel in Thee? Who—who knoweth the mysteries of the will with its vigor? ‘Man doth not yield him to the angels, *nor unto death utterly* save only through the weakness of his feeble will’ ”

And now, as if exhausted with emotion, she suffered her white arms to fall, and returned solemnly to her bed of death. And as she breathed her last sighs, there came mingled with them a low murmur from her lips. I bent to them my ear, and distinguished, again, the concluding words of the passage in Glanvill: *‘Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will’*

She died—and I, crushed into the very dust with sorrow, could no longer endure the lonely desolation of my dwelling in the dim and decaying city by the Rhine. I had no lack of what the world calls wealth. Ligeia had brought me far more, very far more, than ordinarily falls to the lot of mortals. After a few months, therefore, of weary and aimless wandering, I purchased, and put in some repair, an abbey, which I shall not name, in one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England. The gloomy and dreary grandeur of the building, that almost savage aspect of the domain, the many melancholy and time-honored memories connected with both, had much in unison with the feelings of utter abandonment which had driven me into that remote and unsocial region of the country. Yet although the external abbey, with its verdant decay hanging about it, suffered but little alteration, I gave way with a child-like perversity, and perchance with a faint hope of alleviating my sorrows, to a display of more than regal magnificence within. For such follies, even in childhood, I had imbibed a taste, and now they came back to me as if in the dotage of grief. Alas, I feel how much even of incipient madness might have been discovered in the gorgeous and fantastic draperies, in the solemn

carvings of Egypt, in the wild cornices and furniture, in the Bedlam patterns of the carpets of tufted gold! I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labors and my orders had taken a coloring from my dreams. But these absurdities I must not pause to detail. Let me speak only of that one chamber, ever accursed, whither, in a moment of mental alienation, I led from the altar as my bride—as the successor of the unforgotten Ligeia—the fair-haired and blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine.

There is no individual portion of the architecture and decoration of that bridal chamber which is not now visibly before me. Where were the souls of the haughty family of the bride, when, through thirst of gold, they permitted to pass the threshold of an apartment so bedecked, a maiden and a daughter so beloved? I have said that I minutely remember the details of the chamber—yet I am sadly forgetful on topics of deep moment, and here there was no system, no keeping, in the fantastic display, to take hold upon the memory. The room lay in a high turret of the castellated abbey, was pentagonal in shape, and of capacious size. Occupying the whole southern face of the pentagon was the sole window—an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice—a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or moon, passing through it, fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within. Over the upper portion of this huge window extended the trellis-work of an aged vine, which clambered up the massy walls of the turret. The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device. From out the most central recess of this melancholy vaulting depended, by a single chain of gold with long links, a huge censer of the same metal, Saracenic in pattern, and with many perforations so contrived that there writhed in and out of them, as if endued with a serpent vitality, a continual succession of parti-colored fires.

Some few ottomans and golden candelabra, of Eastern figure, were in various stations about, and there was the couch, too—the bridal couch—of an Indian model, and low, and sculptured of solid ebony, with a pall-like canopy above. In each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor, with their aged lids full of immemorial sculpture. But in the draping of the apartment lay, alas! the chief fantasy of all. The lofty walls, gigantic in height, even unproportionably so, were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry—tapestry of a material which was found alike as a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the ottomans and the ebony bed, as a canopy for the bed, and as the gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the window. The material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and

indeed traceable to a very remote period of antiquity, they were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities, but upon a farther advance, this appearance gradually departed, and, step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies, giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole.

In halls such as these, in a bridal chamber such as this, I passed, with the Lady of Tremaine, the unhallowed hours of the first month of our marriage—passed them with but little disquietude. That my wife dreaded the fierce moodiness of my temper—that she shunned me, and loved me but little—I could not help perceiving, but it gave me rather pleasure than otherwise. I loathed her with a hatred belonging more to demon than to man. My memory flew back (oh, with what intensity of regret!) to Ligeia, the beloved, the august, the beautiful, the entombed. I revelled in recollections of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty, her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous love. Now, then, did my spirit fully and freely burn with more than all the fires of her own. In the excitement of my opium dreams (for I was habitually fettered in the shackles of the drug), I would call aloud upon her name, during the silence of the night, or among the sheltered recesses of the glens by day, as if, through the wild eagerness, the solemn passion, the consuming ardor of my longing for the departed, I could restore her to the pathway she had abandoned—ah, *could* it be forever?—upon the earth.

About the commencement of the second month of the marriage, the Lady Rowena was attacked with sudden illness, from which her recovery was slow. The fever which consumed her, rendered her nights uneasy, and in her perturbed state of half-slumber, she spoke of sounds, and of motions, in and about the chamber of the turret, which I concluded had no origin save in the distemper of her fancy, or perhaps in the phantasmagoric influences of the chamber itself. She became at length convalescent—finally, well. Yet but a brief period elapsed, ere a second more violent disorder again threw her upon a bed of suffering, and from this attack her frame, at all times feeble, never altogether recovered. Her illnesses were, after this epoch, of alarming character, and of more alarming recurrence, defying alike the knowledge and the great exertions of her physicians. With the increase of the chronic disease, which had thus apparently taken too sure hold upon her constitution to be eradicated by human means, I could not fail to observe a similar increase in the nervous irritation of her temperament, and in her excitability by trivial causes of fear. She spoke again, and now more frequently and pertinaciously, of the sounds—of the slight sounds—and of the unusual motions among the tapestries, to which she had formerly alluded.

One night, near the closing in of September, she pressed this distressing

subject with more than usual emphasis upon my attention. She had just awakened from an unquiet slumber, and I had been watching, with feelings half of anxiety, half of vague terror, the workings of her emaciated countenance. I sat by the side of her ebony bed, upon one of the ottomans of India. She partly arose, and spoke, in an earnest low whisper, of sounds which she *then* heard, but which I could not hear—of motions which she *then* saw, but which I could not perceive. The wind was rushing hurriedly behind the tapestries, and I wished to show her (what, let me confess it, I could not *all* believe) that those almost inarticulate breathings, and those very gentle variations of the figures upon the wall, were but the natural effects of that customary rushing of the wind. But a deadly pallor, overspreading her face, had proved to me that my exertions to reassure her would be fruitless. She appeared to be fainting, and no attendants were within call. I remembered where was deposited a decanter of light wine which had been ordered by her physicians, and hastened across the chamber to procure it. But, as I stepped beneath the light of the censer, two circumstances of a startling nature attracted my attention. I had felt that some palpable although invisible object had passed lightly by my person, and I saw that there lay upon the golden carpet, in the very middle of the rich lustre thrown from the censer, a shadow—a faint, indefinite shadow of angelic aspect—such as might be fancied for the shadow of a shade. But I was wild with the excitement of an immoderate dose of opium, and heeded these things but little, nor spoke of them to Rowena. Having found the wine, I recrossed the chamber, and poured out a gobletful, which I held to the lips of the fainting lady. She had now partially recovered, however, and took the vessel herself, while I sank upon an ottoman near me, with my eyes fastened upon her person. It was then that I became distinctly aware of a gentle footfall upon the carpet, and near the couch and in a second thereafter, as Rowena was in the act of raising the wine to her lips, I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw, fall within the goblet, as if from some invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room, three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby-colored fluid. If this I saw—not so Rowena. She swallowed the wine unhesitatingly, and I forbore to speak to her of a circumstance which must after all, I considered, have been but the suggestion of a vivid imagination, rendered morbidly active by the terror of the lady, by the opium, and by the hour.

Yet I cannot conceal it from my own perception that, immediately subsequent to the fall of the ruby-drops, a rapid change for the worse took place in the disorder of my wife, so that, on the third subsequent night, the hands of her menials prepared her for the tomb, and on the fourth, I sat alone, with her shrouded body, in that fantastic chamber which had received her as my bride. Wild visions, opium-engendered, flitted shadow-like before me. I gazed with unquiet eye upon the sarcophagi in the angles of the room, upon the varying figures of the drapery, and upon the writhing of the parti-colored fires in the censer overhead. My eyes then fell, as I called to mind the circumstances of a former night, to the spot beneath the glare of the censer where I had seen the faint traces of the shadow

It was there, however, no longer, and breathing with greater freedom, I turned my glances to the pallid and rigid figure upon the bed. Then rushed upon me a thousand memories of Ligeia—and then came back upon my heart, with the turbulent violence of a flood, the whole of that unutterable woe with which I had regarded *her* thus enshrouded. The night waned, and still, with a bosom full of bitter thoughts of the one only and supremely beloved, I remained gazing upon the body of Rowena.

It might have been midnight, or perhaps earlier, or later, for I had taken no note of time, when a sob, low, gentle, but very distinct, startled me from my reverie. I *felt* that it came from the bed of ebony—the bed of death. I listened in an agony of superstitious terror—but there was no repetition of the sound. I strained my vision to detect any motion in the corpse—but there was not the slightest perceptible. Yet I could not have been deceived. I *had* heard the noise, however faint, and my soul was awakened within me. I resolutely and perseveringly kept my attention riveted upon the body. Many minutes elapsed before any circumstance occurred tending to throw light upon the mystery. At length it became evident that a slight, a very feeble, and barely noticeable tinge of color had flushed up within the cheeks, and along the sunken small veins of the eyelids. Through a species of unutterable horror and awe, for which the language of mortality has no sufficiently energetic expression, I felt my heart cease to beat, my limbs grow rigid where I sat. Yet a sense of duty finally operated to restore my self-possession. I could no longer doubt that we had been precipitate in our preparations—that Rowena still lived. It was necessary that some immediate exertion be made, yet the turret was altogether apart from the portion of the abbey tenanted by the servants—there were none within call—I had no means of summoning them to my aid without leaving the room for many minutes—and this I could not venture to do. I therefore struggled alone in my endeavors to call back the spirit still hovering. In a short period it was certain, however, that a relapse had taken place, the color disappeared from both eyelid and cheek, leaving a wanness even more than that of marble, the lips became doubly shrivelled and pinched up in the ghastly expression of death, a repulsive clamminess and coldness overspread rapidly the surface of the body, and all the usual rigorous stiffness immediately supervened. I fell back with a shudder upon the couch from which I had been so startlingly aroused, and again gave myself up to passionate waking visions of Ligeia.

An hour thus elapsed, when (could it be possible?) I was a second time aware of some vague sound issuing from the region of the bed. I listened—in extremity of horror. The sound came again—it was a sigh. Rushing to the corpse, I saw—distinctly saw—a tremor upon the lips. In a minute afterwards they relaxed, disclosing a bright line of the pearly teeth. Amazement now struggled in my bosom with the profound awe which had hitherto reigned there alone. I felt that my vision grew dim, that my reason wandered, and it was only by a violent effort that I at length succeeded in nerving myself to the task which duty thus once more had pointed out. There was now a partial glow upon the forehead and upon





of Tremaine And the chin, with its dimples, as in health, might it not be hers? but *had she then grown taller since her malady?* What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought? One bound, and I had reached her feet! Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head the ghastly cerements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long and dishevelled hair, *it was blacker than the raven wings of the midnight!* And now slowly opened *the eyes* of the figure which stood before me "Here then, at least," I shrieked aloud, "can I never—can I never be mistaken—these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes—of my lost love—of the lady—of the LADY LIGEIA "

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[See the critical comments on this story in the Appendix ]

If you are willing to listen, I shall tell you the story of how I once took a burden upon myself, a burden which almost, almost ruined my life for me. And why do you think I did it? Simply because I was an inexperienced young man and none too shrewd. So far as that goes, I may be far from clever now, too, because if I were clever, I might have had a little money by now. How does the saying go? If you have money, you are not only clever, but handsome too, and can sing like a nightingale!

Well, there I was, a young man living with my father- and mother-in-law, as was the custom with young married couples in those days. And, as was also the custom in those days, I sat in the synagogue all day studying the *Torah*. Now and then I glanced into secular books too, but that had to be done on the sly so my father- and mother-in-law should not find out, not so much my father-in-law as my mother-in-law, a woman who was the real head of the family. You can really say she wore the pants. She managed all their affairs herself, picked out the husbands for her daughters herself, and herself arranged the entire match. It was she who had picked me out too, she who examined me in the *Torah*, she who brought me to Zvohil from Rademishli. I am from Rademishli, you know—that's where I was born. You must have heard of the town, it was recently in the papers.

So I lived in Zvohil with my mother-in-law, struggled over the Rambam's *Guide to the Perplexed*—never stepping out of the house, you might say, till the time came when I had to register for military service. Then, as the custom was, I had to bestir myself, go back to Rademishli, straighten out my papers, see what exemption I could claim, and arrange for a passport which I would need if I ever left the district. That, you could say, was my first venture into the outside world. All by myself, to prove that I was now a responsible person, I went forth into the marketplace and hired a sleigh. God sent me a bargain. I found a peasant who was going back to Rademishli with a freshly-painted, broad-backed sleigh with wings at the sides like an eagle. But I had failed to pay attention to the fact that the horse was a white one, and a white horse, my mother-in-law said, was bad luck. "I hope I'm lying," she said, "but this trip will be an unlucky one." "Bite your tongue," burst out my father-in-law, and at once was sorry, because he had to take his punishment right on the spot. But to me

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he whispered, "Women's nonsense," and I began to pack up for the trip my *tallis* and *tfillin*, some freshly baked rolls, a few *rubles* for expenses, and three pillows—a pillow to sit on, a pillow to lean against, and a pillow to keep my feet warm And I was ready to go

So I said goodbye to everybody, and started on my way to Rademishli It was late in winter, the hard-packed snow made a perfect road for the sleigh The horse, though a white one, went as smoothly as a breeze, and my driver turned out to be one of those silent fellows who answers everything either "Uh-huh," meaning "yes," or "Uh-uh" for "no" That's all You couldn't get another word out of him

I had left home right after dinner and made myself as comfortable as I could, with a pillow under me, a pillow at my back, and one at my feet The horse pranced, the driver cluck-clucked, the sleigh slid along, the wind blew, and snowflakes drifted through the air like feathers and covered the wide expanse around us My heart felt light, my spirits free After all, it was my first trip alone into God's world I was all alone, a free man, my own master! I leaned back and spread myself out in the sleigh like a lord But in winter, no matter how warmly you are dressed, when the frost goes through you, you feel like stopping somewhere to warm yourself and catch your breath before going on again And I began to dream of a warm inn, a boiling *samovar*, and a fresh pot roast with hot gravy These dreams made me crave for food I actually became hungry I began to ask the driver about an inn, asked if the next one was far away He answered, "Uh-uh," meaning "no" I asked if it was close, and he answered, "Uh-huh," meaning "yes" "How close?" I asked But that he would not answer, no matter how hard I tried to make him

I imagined what it would have been like if this were a Jew driving the sleigh He would have told me not only where the inn was, but who ran it, what his name was, how many children he had, how much rent he paid, what he got out of it, how long he had been there, who had been there before him—in short, everything We are a strange people, we Jews

But there I was, dreaming of a warm inn, seeing a hot *samovar* in front of me, and other good things like that, till God took pity on me, the driver clucked to the horse, turned the sleigh a little aside, and there appeared before us a small gray hut covered with snow, a country inn standing alone in the wide, snow-covered field, like a forsaken, forgotten tombstone

Driving up to the inn with a flourish, the driver took the horse and sleigh into the barn and I went straight toward the inn itself, opened the door, and stopped dead Here is what I saw On the floor in the middle of the room lay a corpse covered with black, with two copper candlesticks holding small candles at its head All around the body sat small children in ragged clothes beating their heads with their fists and screaming and wailing, "Mo-ther! Mother!" And a tall, thin man with long, thin legs, dressed in a torn summer coat entirely out of season, marched up and down the room with long strides, wringing his hands and saying to himself, "What shall I do? What shall I do? I don't know what to do!"

I understood right away what a happy scene I had come upon. My first thought was to run away. I turned to leave, but the door was slammed shut behind me and my feet felt rooted to the ground. I could not move from the spot. Seeing a stranger, the tall man with the long legs ran up to me, stretched out both arms like a man seeking help.

"What do you think of my misfortune?" he asked, pointing to the weeping children. "Poor little things, their mother just died. What shall I do? What shall I do? I don't know what to do!"

"Blessed is He who gives, and He who takes," I said, and started to comfort him with the words one uses on such occasions. But he interrupted me.

"She was as good as dead for the past year, poor thing. It was consumption. She begged for death to come. And now she's dead and here we are, stuck in this forsaken spot. What can I do? Go to the village to find a wagon to take her to town? How can I leave the children here alone in the middle of this field, with night coming on? God in heaven, what shall I do? What shall I do? I don't know what to begin to do!"

With these words the man began to weep, strangely, without tears, as though he were laughing, and a queer sound came from his lips, like a cough. All my strength left me. Who could think of hunger now? Who remembered the cold?

I forgot everything and said to him, "I am driving from Zvohil to Rademishli with a very fine sleigh. If the town you speak of is not very far from here I can let you take the sleigh and I'll wait here. If it won't take too long, that is."

"Long may you live!" he cried. "For this good deed you'll earn eternal life! As I am a Jew, eternal life!" he exclaimed, and threw his arms around me. "The town is not far away, only four or five *versts*. It will take no more than an hour and I'll send the sleigh right back. You are earning eternal life, I tell you! Eternal life! Children, get up from the ground and thank this young man. Kiss his hands and his feet! He is letting me use his sleigh to take your mother to the burial ground. Eternal life! As sure as I'm a Jew, eternal life!"

This news did not exactly cheer them. When they heard their father talk about taking their mother away they threw themselves around her again and began to weep louder than ever. And yet it was good news that a man had been found to do them this kindness. God himself had sent him there. They looked at me as at a redeemer, something like Elijah, and I must tell you the plain truth. I began to see myself as an extraordinary being. Suddenly in my own eyes I grew in stature and became what the world calls a hero. I was ready to lift mountains, turn worlds upside down. There was nothing that seemed too difficult for me, and these words tore themselves out of my lips.

"I'll tell you what. I'll take her there myself, that is, my driver and I. I'll save you the trouble of going and leaving the children behind."

The more I talked the more the little children wept, wept and looked up at me as at an angel from heaven, and I grew in my own eyes taller and

taller, till I almost reached the sky For the moment I forgot I had always been afraid to touch a dead body, and with my own hands helped to carry the woman out and lift her into the sleigh I had to promise the driver another half-ruble and a drink of whisky on the spot At first he scratched the back of his neck and mumbled something in his nose But after the third drink he softened up and we started on our way, all three of us, the driver and I and the innkeeper's wife, Chava Nechama That was her name, Chava Nechama, daughter of Raphael Michel I remember it as if it had been this morning, because all along the way I kept repeating to myself the name that her husband had repeated to me several times For when the time came to bury her with the proper ceremony, her full name would have to be given So all the way I repeated to myself, "Chava Nechama, daughter of Raphael Michel Chava Nechama, daughter of Raphael Michel Chava Nechama, daughter of Raphael Michel " But while I kept repeating the woman's name, the husband's name escaped me completely He had told me his name too and assured me that when I came to the town and mentioned the name, the corpse would be taken from me at once and I would be able to go on my way He was well known there, he said Year after year he came there for the holidays, contributed money for the synagogue, for the bath house, and everywhere he paid well He told me more, filled my head with instructions, where I should go, what I should say and do, and every bit of it flew out of my head You'd think that at least a word of it would have remained But it didn't Not a word

All my thoughts revolved about one thing only, here I was, carrying a dead woman That alone was enough to make me forget everything, even my own name, for from early childhood I had been mortally afraid of dead bodies You'd have to pay me a fortune to make me stay alone with a corpse And now it seemed to me that the glazed, half-open eyes stared at me and the dead, sealed lips would open any minute and a strange voice would be heard as though from a sepulchre a voice so terrible that merely thinking of it almost threw me into a faint It is not for nothing that such stories are told of the dead, of people who have fainted out of mere fright, and lost their minds or their powers of speech

So we rode along, the three of us I had given the dead woman one of my pillows and had placed her crossways in the sleigh, right at my feet In order to keep myself from thinking melancholy thoughts I turned away from the body, began to watch the sky and softly to repeat to myself, "Chava Nechama, daughter of Raphael Michel Chava Nechama, daughter of Raphael Michel," until the name became jumbled in my mind and I found myself saying, "Chava Raphael, daughter of Nechama Michel," and, "Raphael Michel, daughter of Chava Nechama "

I had not been aware that it was getting darker and darker The wind was blowing stronger all the time and the snow continued to fall until it was so deep that we could not find the road The sleigh went hither and yon, without direction, and the driver began to grumble at first softly, then louder and more insistently, and I could swear that he was blessing me with a threefold blessing I asked him, "What is the matter with you?" He

spat into the snow and turned upon me with such murderous anger that I shrank back "Look what you've done!" he cried "You've been the ruination of me and my horse!" Because of this, because we had taken a dead woman into the sleigh, the horse had strayed from the road, and here we were wandering, and God alone knew how long we would keep on wandering For night was almost here, and then we would really be lost

At this good news I was ready to go back to the inn, unload our baggage, forget eternal life But it was too late, said the driver We could neither go ahead nor turn back We were wandering in the middle of the field, the devil alone knew where The road was snowed under, the sky was black It was late The horse was dead tired May a bad end come to that innkeeper and all the innkeepers of the world! Why hadn't he broken a leg before he had stopped at the inn? Why hadn't he choked on the first glass of whisky before he had let himself be talked into this folly, and for a miserable half-*ruble* perish here in the wilderness, together with his poor little horse As for himself, it didn't matter so much Maybe it was fated that he should come to a bad end, and at this spot But the poor little horse, what had he done? An innocent animal, to be sacrificed like that?

I could swear that there were tears in his voice And to make him feel better I told him that I would give him another half-*ruble* and two more glasses of whisky At this he became furious and told me plainly that if I didn't keep my mouth shut he would throw our cargo out of the sleigh altogether And I thought to myself what would I do if he threw the corpse and me out into the snow? Who knew what a man like that could do when he lost his temper? I had better be quiet, sit in the sleigh buried in pillows and try to keep from falling asleep, because in the first place, how could a person fall asleep with a dead body in front of him? And in the second place, I had heard that in wintertime you mustn't fall asleep outside, because if you did you might fall asleep forever

But in spite of myself my eyes kept shutting I would have given anything at that moment for a short nap And I kept rubbing at my eyes but my eyes would not obey They kept shutting slowly and opening and shutting again And the sleigh slid over the soft deep white snow and a strange sweet numbness poured through my limbs and I felt an extraordinary calm descend on me And I wished that this sweet numbness and calm would last and last I wished it would last forever But an unknown force, I don't know where it came from, stood by and prodded me "Do not sleep Do not fall asleep" With a great effort I tore my eyes open and the numbness resolved itself into a chill that went through my bones and the calm turned to fear and shrinking and melancholy—may the Lord have mercy on me I imagined that my corpse was stirring, that it uncovered itself and looked at me with half-shut eyes as though to say, "What did you have against me, young man? Why did you drag me off, a dead woman, the mother of young children, and then fail to bring me to consecrated ground?"

The wind blew It shrieked with a human voice, whistled right into my

ears, confided a horrible secret to me. Terrible thoughts, frightful images followed one another in my mind and it seemed to me that we were all buried under the snow, all of us, the driver, the horse, the dead woman and I. We were all dead, all of us. Only the corpse— isn't it remarkable?—only the dead woman, the innkeeper's wife, was alive!

Suddenly I heard my driver clucking to his horse cheerfully, thanking God, and sighing and crossing himself in the dark. I sat up and looked around. In the distance I saw a gleam of light. The light glimmered, went out, and glimmered again. A house, I thought, and thanked God with all my heart. I turned to the driver. "We must have found the road," I said. "Are we close to town?"

"Uh-huh," said the driver in his usual brief manner, without anger, and I could have thrown my arms around his wide shoulders and kissed him, I was so happy to hear that pleasant brief "Uh-huh" which was more wonderful to me at that moment than the wisest discourse.

"What's your name?" I asked, surprised at myself for not having asked it before.

"Mikita," he answered, in one short word, as was his custom.

"Mikita," I repeated, and the name Mikita took on a strange charm. He answered, "Uh-huh."

I wished that he would tell me more. I wanted to hear him say something more, at least a few words. Mikita had suddenly become something dear to me, and his horse too, a charming animal! I began a conversation with him about his horse, told him what a fine horse he had. A very fine horse!

To which Mikita answered, "Uh-huh."

"And your sleigh, Mikita, is a fine sleigh too!"

Again he answered, "Uh-huh."

Beyond that he would not say a word.

"Don't you like to talk, Mikita, old fellow?" I asked.

"Uh-huh," he said. And I burst out laughing. I was as happy as though I had found a treasure, or made a wonderful discovery. In a word, I was lucky. I was more than lucky. Do you know what I wanted to do? I wanted to raise my voice and sing. That's a fact. I have always had that habit. When I am feeling good I burst out singing. My wife, bless her, knows this trait of mine, and asks, "What happened now, Noah? How much have you earned today to make you so happy?" To a woman, with her woman's brains, it is possible for a man to be happy only when he has made some money. Why does it happen that women are so much more greedy than men? Who earns the money, we or they? But there! I'm afraid I've gone off on the road to Boiberik again.

Well, with God's help we came to the town. It was still very early, long before daybreak. The town was sound asleep. Not a glimmer of light showed anywhere. We barely distinguished a house with a large gate and a besom over the gate, the sign of a guest house or inn. We stopped, climbed down, Mikita and I, and began to pound at the gate with our fists. We pounded and pounded till at last we saw a light in the window.



Then we heard someone shuffle up to the gate, and a voice called out, "Who's there?"

"Open, Uncle," I cried, "and you'll earn eternal life "

"Eternal life? Who are you?" came the voice from behind the gate, and the lock began to turn

"Open the door," I said "We've brought a corpse with us "

"A what?"

"A corpse "

"What do you mean, a corpse?"

"By a corpse I mean a dead person A dead woman that we've brought from out in the country "

Inside the gate a silence fell We heard only the lock being turned again and then the feet shuffling off The lights went out and we were left standing in the snow I was so angry that I told the driver to help me, and together we pounded at the window with our fists And we pounded so heartily that the light went on again and the voice was heard once more, "What do you want? Will you stop bothering me!"

"In God's name," I begged as if pleading with a highwayman for my life, "have pity on me We have a corpse with us, I tell you "

"What corpse?"

"The innkeeper's wife "

"What innkeeper are you talking about? "

"I've forgotten his name, but hers is Chava Michel, daughter of Chana Raphael, I mean Chana Raphael, daughter of Chava Michel, Chana Chava Chana, I mean "

"Go away, you *shlimazl* or I'll pour a bucket of water over you!"

And with this, the innkeeper shuffled off again and once more the light went out There was nothing we could do It was only an hour or so later, when day was beginning to break that the gate opened a crack and a dark head streaked with white popped out and said to me, "Was it you that banged at the window?"

"Of course! Who do you think?"

"What did you want?"

"I've brought a corpse "

"A corpse? Then take it to the *shammes* of the Burial Society "

"Where does your *shammes* live? What's his name?"

"Yechiel's his name, and he lives at the foot of the hill right near the Baths "

"And where are your Baths? "

"You don't know where the Baths are? You must be a stranger here! Where are you from, young man?"

"Where am I from? From Rademishli That's where I was born But right now I'm coming from Zvohil And I'm bringing a corpse from a village close by The innkeeper's wife She died of consumption "

"That's too bad But what's that got to do with you?"

"Nothing at all I was driving by and he begged me, the innkeeper, that is He lives all alone out there in the country with all those small children

There was nowhere to bury her, so when he asked me to earn eternal life, I thought to myself why not?"

"That doesn't make sense," he said to me "You'd better see the officers of the Burial Society first "

"And who are your officers? Where do they live?"

"You don't know the officers of our Burial Society? Well, first there's Reb Shepsel, who lives over there beyond the marketplace Then there is Reb Eleazer-Moishe, who lives right in the middle of the marketplace And then there is Reb Yossi, he's an officer too, who lives near the old synagogue But the one you'd better see first is Reb Shepsel He's the one who runs everything A hard man, I'm warning you You won't persuade him so easily "

"Thank you very much," I said "May you live to tell people better news than you've told me And when can I see these men?"

"When do you suppose? In the morning after services "

"Thanks again But what shall I do until then? At least let me in so I can warm myself What is this town anyway, another Sodom?"

At this the innkeeper locked the doors again, and once more it was as silent as a tomb What could we do now? Here we were in the middle of the road with our sleigh, and Mikita fuming, grumbling, scratching his neck, spitting and roaring out his three-dimensional curses "May that foul innkeeper roast in hell through all eternity, and every other innkeeper with him!" For himself he didn't care Let the evil spirits take him But his horse, what did they have against his poor little horse, to torture it, let it starve and freeze like that? An innocent animal being sacrificed What had it ever done?

I felt disgraced before my driver What could he be thinking of us? A Jew treating another Jew like this We who were supposed to be the wise and merciful ones and they, the common, unlearned peasants Thus I blamed the whole tribe for the discourtesy of one man, as is always our custom

Well, we waited for daylight to come and the town to begin to show signs of life And finally it did Somewhere we heard the grating of a door, the sigh of a bucket From a few chimneys smoke curled up, and in the distance roosters crowed louder and stronger Soon the doors all opened and God's creatures appeared, in the image of cows, calves, goats, and also men, women and young girls, wrapped up in shawls, bundled from head to foot like mummies In short the whole town had come to life as if it were a human being It awoke, washed, pulled on its clothes, and set out to work the men to the synagogue to pray and study and say *T-hulim*, the women to the ovens, the calves and the goats, and I to inquire about the officers of the Burial Society, Reb Shepsel, Reb Eleazer-Moishe, Reb Yossi

Wherever I asked they put me through a cross-examination Which Shepsel? Which Eleazer-Moishe, which Yossi? There were, they said, several Shepsels, Eleazers and Yossis in town And when I told them that I wanted the officers of the Burial Society, they looked frightened and tried

to find out why a young man should want the officers of the Burial Society so early in the morning I didn't let them feel me out long, but opened my heart to them and told them the whole secret of the burden I had taken upon myself. You should have seen what happened then. Do you suppose they rushed to relieve me of my misfortune? God forbid! They ran out all right, every one of them, but it was only to see if there really was a corpse or if I had invented the whole story. They formed a ring about us, a ring that kept shifting because of the cold, some people leaving and others taking their place, looking into the sleigh, shaking their heads, shrugging their shoulders, and asking over and over who the corpse was, and where it came from, who I was, where I had got it, and gave me no help whatever.

With the greatest of difficulty I managed to find out where Reb Shepsel lived. I found him with his face turned to the wall, wrapped in his *tallis* and *tfillin* praying so ardently, with such a melodious voice and so much feeling that the walls actually sang. He cracked his knuckles, rocked back and forth, made strange movements with his body. I enjoyed it tremendously, because in the first place I love to listen to such spirited praying, and besides, it gave me a chance to warm my frozen bones. When Reb Shepsel finally turned his face to me his eyes were still full of tears and he looked like a man of God, his soul as far removed from earth as his big fat body was from heaven. But since he was still in the midst of his prayers and did not want to interrupt them with secular discourse, he spoke to me in the holy tongue, that is, in a language that consisted of gestures of the hands, winks of the eye, shrugs and motions of the head and even the nose, with a few Hebrew words thrown in. If you wish, I can relate the conversation to you word by word, and no doubt you will understand which words were his and which were mine.

"*Sholom aleichem*, Reb Shepsel."

"*Aleichem sholom* I-yo Nu-o."

"Thank you. I have been sitting all night."

"Nu-o? Ma?"

"I have a request to make of you, Reb Shepsel. You will earn eternal life."

"Eternal life? Good! In what way?"

"I have brought you a corpse."

"Corpse! What corpse?"

"Not far from here there is a country inn. The owner is a poor man whose wife just died of consumption, and she left him with several small children, may God have compassion on them. If I had not taken pity on them, I don't know what the poor innkeeper would have done, alone out there in the middle of the field with the corpse."

"God have mercy on them. Well, and did he give you anything for the Burial Society?"

"Where is he going to get the money for that? He's a poor man. Poor as can be, and with a houseful of children. You will earn eternal life, Reb Shepsel."

"Eternal life Good Very good! Jews Poor people ah, yes "

And here he broke in with a series of strange sounds accompanied by so many gestures, winks, blinks, shrugs and motions of the head that I could not begin to understand what he was driving at

And seeing that I could not follow him, he turned his face to the wall in disgust and once more began to pray, but not with the same ardor as before His voice was lower, but he rocked back and forth faster than ever, till he came to the end, threw off his *tallis* and *tfillin* and fell on me with such fury that you would have thought I had outwitted him in some transaction and ruined him completely

"Look," he said to me, "our town is such a poor one, with so many paupers of our own for whom shrouds must be provided when they die, and here you come from some strange place with a corpse They come here from everywhere Everybody comes here!"

I defended myself as well as I could I said I was an innocent man trying to do only what was proper with respect to the dead Suppose a dead body had been found in the street and had to be buried, laid to his eternal rest "You are," I said, "an honest man, a pious one You can earn eternal life with this deed "

At this he became even angrier and began to lash out at me, not with blows, but with words

"Is that so?" he cried "You are a man who craves eternal life? Then take a walk around our town and see to it that our own people stop dying of hunger and freezing of cold Then you will earn eternal life Ah-hah! A young man who deals in eternal life! Go take your merchandise to the ne er-do-wells Maybe they will be interested We have our own duties to perform, our own poor to bury And if we suddenly began to yearn for this eternal life you talk about we could find our own way to earn it!"

With these words Reb Shepsel showed me out and slammed the door behind me And I swear to you on my word of honor that from that morning on I have despised all those overly pious people who pray out loud and beat their breasts and bow low and make crazy motions I have hated those holy ones who talk with God all the time, who pretend to serve Him, and do whatever they want, all in His name! True, you might say that these modern irreligious people nowadays are no better and may even be worse than the oldtimers with their false piety But they're not so revolting At least they don't pretend to be on speaking terms with God But there! I'm on the way to Boiberik again

Well, the president, Reb Shepsel, had driven me off So what should I do next? Go to the other trustees, of course But at this point a miracle occurred I saved myself the trouble of going to them, because they came to me instead They met me face to face at the door and said

"Are you the young man we're looking for?"

"And what young man are you looking for?"

"The one who brought a body here Is that you?"

"Yes, I'm the one What do you want me for?"

"Come back with us to Reb Shepsel and we'll talk it over "

"Talk it over?" I asked "What is there to talk over? You take the body from me, let me go on my way—and you'll earn eternal life "

"You don't like the way we do things? Is anyone keeping you here?" they asked "Go take your body anywhere you want, even to Rademishli, and we'll be grateful to you "

"Thanks for the advice," I told them

"You're welcome," said they

So we went back into Reb Shepsel's house and the three trustees began to talk They argued and quarrelled, called each other names The other two said Reb Shepsel was stubborn, a hard man to deal with, and Reb Shepsel yelled back at them, shouted, ranted, quoted the law the town's own poor came first At this the other two fell on him

"Is that so? Then you want the young man to take the body back with him?"

"God forbid," I said "What do you want, I should take the body back? I barely came here alive, almost got lost on the way My driver wanted to throw me out of the sleigh in the open field somewhere I beg you Have pity on me Take the corpse off my hands You'll earn eternal life "

"Eternal life is a fine enough thing," answered one of them, a tall thin man with bony fingers, the one called Eleazer-Moishe "We'll take the body away from you and bury it, but it will cost you something "

"What do you mean?" I asked "Here I undertook a responsibility like this, at the risk of my life, almost got lost on the way, and you want money!"

"But you're getting eternal life, aren't you?" said Reb Shepsel with such an ugly leer that I wanted to go after him as he deserved But I managed to control myself After all, I was still at their mercy

"Let's get to work," said the one called Reb Yossi, a small man with a short scraggly beard "I suppose you know, young man, that you have another problem on your hands You have no papers, no papers at all "

"What papers?" I asked

"How do we know whose body it is? Maybe it's not what you said it was," said the tall man with the bony fingers, the one called Eleazer-Moishe

I stood looking from one to the other, and the tall one with the bony fingers, the one called Eleazer-Moishe, shook his head and pointed at me with his long fingers and said

"Yes, yes Maybe you murdered some woman yourself Maybe it's your own wife that you brought here and made up this story about a country inn, the innkeeper's wife, consumption, small children, eternal life "

I must have looked frightened to death at these words, for the one they called Reb Yossi began to comfort me, telling me that they themselves had nothing against me They understood very well that I was not a robber or a murderer, but still I was a stranger, and a dead body was not a sack of potatoes We were dealing with a dead person, a corpse They had, he explained, a rabbi and a police inspector in their town A report had to be made out

"Yes, of course A report A report," added the tall one, the one called Eleazer-Moishe, pointing with his finger and looking down at me accusingly as though I had committed some crime I couldn't say another word I felt a sweat break out on my forehead and I was ready to faint I was well aware of the miserable plight I had fallen into It was a disgrace, a sorrow and a heartache in one But, I thought to myself, what was the use of starting the whole discussion over again with them? So I took out my purse and said to the three trustees of the Burial Society

"Listen, my friends, here is the whole story I see what I have fallen into It was an evil spirit that made me stop at that country inn to warm myself just when the innkeeper's wife had to go ahead and die, and I had to listen to the poor wretch left with all the children begging me, promising eternal life And now I have to pay for it Here is my purse You'll find about seventy-odd *rubles* in it Take it and do what you think best Just leave me enough to get me to Rademishli, and take the body away from me and let me go on my way"

I must have spoken with great feeling for the three trustees looked at each other and would not touch my purse They told me that their town was not Sodom, they were not robbers True, the town was a poor one, with more paupers than rich people, but to fall on a strange man and order him to hand over his money, that they would not think of Whatever I wanted to give of my own free will was all right To do it without charging at all was impossible It was a poor town, and there were all the expenses, pallbearers, a shroud, drinks, the cost of the burial lot But it was not necessary for me to throw my money away If I started to do that, there would be no end to it

Well, what more can I tell you? If the innkeeper had had two hundred thousand *rubles*, his wife could not have had a finer funeral The whole town came to look at the young man who had brought the corpse They told each other that it was the body of his mother-in-law, a rich woman (I don't know where they got the mother-in-law story) At any rate they came to welcome the young man who had brought the rich mother-in-law and was throwing out money right and left They actually pointed their fingers at me And as for beggars, they were like the sands of the ocean In all my life I have never seen so many beggars in one place, not even in front of the synagogue on *Yom Kippur* eve They pulled at the skirts of my coat, they almost tore me to pieces How often do they see a young man who throws away money like that? I was lucky that the trustees came to my rescue and kept me from giving away all I had Especially the tall one with the bony fingers, Eleazer-Moishe, did not step away from me for a moment He kept pointing at me with his finger and saying, "Young man, do not hand out all your money" But the more he spoke the closer the beggars gathered around me, tearing at my flesh "It's nothing," yelled the beggars "It's nothing When you bury such a rich mother-in-law you can afford to spend a few extra *groschen* She must have left him enough money May we have as much!"

"Young man!" yelled one beggar, pulling at my coat, "young man, give

the two of us half a *ruble*! At least forty *kopeks* We were born like this, one lame, the other blind Give us at least a *gulden*, a *gulden* for two maimed ones Surely we deserve a *gulden*!"

"Don't pay attention to him!" shouted another, pushing the first one aside "Do you call them cripples? My wife is a real cripple She can't use her arms or legs, she can't move a limb, and our children are sick too! Give me anything at all and I'll say *kaddish* for your mother-in-law all year—may she rest in Paradise!"

Now I can laugh about it Then it was far from a laughing matter, for the crowd of beggars grew and multiplied about me In half an hour they flooded the marketplace and it was impossible to proceed with the coffin The attendants had to use sticks to disperse the mob, and a fight broke out By that time some peasants began to gather about us too, with their wives and countless children, and at last the news reached the town authorities The police inspector appeared on horseback with a whip in his hand and with one harsh look about him and a few sharp lashes of the whip sent the mob flying in all directions He himself dismounted and came up to the coffin to investigate He started by questioning me, asked who I was, where I had come from, and where I was going I was paralyzed with fear I don't know why, but whenever I see an officer of the law I go numb with fear, though I have no real reason to worry In all my life I have never as much as touched a fly on the wall and I know quite well that a policeman is an ordinary human being, flesh and blood like the rest of us In fact, I know a Jew who is so friendly with the police officer that they visit each other frequently and when there is a holiday the officer eats fish at my friend's house, and when my friend visits the officer he's treated to hard-boiled eggs He can't praise the officer highly enough And yet every time I see a policeman I want to run It must be something I inherited, because, as you know, I come from a region where pogroms came one after another in the days of Vassilchikov, and I'm descended from the victims of those pogroms If I wanted to, I could tell you stories enough about those days—but there, I must be well past Boiberik this time

As I said, the officer began to cross-examine me He wanted to know who I was, and what I was, and where I was going How could I tell him the whole story—that I live with my father-in-law in Zvohil and I'm going to Rademishli to get a passport? But the trustees, long may they live, saved me the trouble Before I could even begin, one of them, the one with the thin beard, called the officer aside and began to talk with him, while the tall one with the bony fingers quickly and in guarded language taught me how to answer the officer

"Be careful what you say," he whispered "Tell him the whole truth You live not far from town and this is your mother-in-law and you brought her here to be buried Tell him your name and your mother-in-law's too Your real names, you understand, straight out of the *Hagadah* And give him the burial fee—don't forget "

And saying this he winked at me and continued, "In the meantime,

your driver looks tired and thirsty We'll take him across the street and give him a chance to rest "

Then the inspector took me into a large building and began to make out some papers I have no idea at all what nonsense I told him I said anything and everything that came to my mind and he wrote it all down

"Your name?"

"Moishe "

"Your father's "

"Itzko "

"Your age?"

"Nineteen "

"Married?"

"Married "

"Children?"

"Of course "

"Your trade?"

"Merchant "

"Who is the dead person?"

"My mother-in-law "

"Her name?"

"Yenta "

"Her father's?"

"Gershon "

"Her age?"

"Forty "

"Cause of death?"

"Fright "

"Fright?"

"Yes, fright "

"What do you mean—fright?" he asked, laying down his pen and lighting a cigarette, looking me over from head to foot Suddenly my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth I thought to myself, if I am inventing a story, I might as well do a good job So I told him how my mother-in-law had been sitting all alone knitting some socks She had forgotten that her young son, a boy named Ephraim, was in the room with her A thirteen-year-old boy, very stupid something of a clown He was making shadow figures on the wall and he put his hands up high behind his mother's back and making a goat's shadow on the wall, opened his mouth and bleated, 'Ba-a-a-a " Struck with fright, she fell from her chair and died on the spot

While I was telling him this story he kept looking at me strangely, not taking his eyes off me He heard me out till the end, spat on the floor, wiped his red mustaches, and led me out again to the coffin He removed the black cover, looked at the dead woman's face and shook his head He looked from the corpse to me, and from me to the corpse, and then said to the trustees, "Well, you can go ahead and bury the woman As for this young man, I'll have to keep him here until I satisfy myself that she was really his mother-in-law and that she died of fright "



You can imagine how I felt when I heard this I turned aside—I couldn't help it—and burst out crying like a small child

"Look here, what are you crying for?" asked the little man they called Reb Yossi, and comforted me, cheered me up as best he could I was innocent, wasn't I? Then what did I have to be afraid of?

"If you don't eat garlic, they'll never smell it on your breath," put in Reb Shepsel with such a smirk that I wanted to give his fat cheeks a couple of good hard slaps

God in heaven, what good did it ever do me to make up this big lie and drag my mother-in-law into it? All I needed now was to have her find out that I had buried her alive and spread the news that she had died of fright

"Don't be afraid," Reb Eleazer broke in, prodding me with his bony fingers "God will take care of you The officer is not such a bad fellow Just give him the burial fee I told you about He'll understand He knows that everything you told him is true "

I cannot tell you any more I don't even want to remember what happened to me after that You understand, of course, that they took the few *gulden* I had left, put me in jail and I had to stand trial But that was child's play compared to what happened when the news reached my father-and mother-in-law that their son-in-law was in prison for having brought a dead woman from somewhere

Naturally they came at once, identified themselves as my parents-in-law, and then the excitement really began! On one side the police went after me "A fine fellow you are! Now, if your mother-in-law Yenta, daughter of Gershon, is alive, then who was the dead woman you brought?" On the other side, my mother-in-law, may she live long! "There is only one thing I want to ask you," she kept saying to me "What did you have against me, to take me and bury me alive?"

Naturally at the trial it turned out that I was innocent, free from all guilt Of course that cost some money too Witnesses had to be brought in, the innkeeper and his children, and finally I was set free But what I went through afterwards, especially from my mother-in-law, that I don't wish my worst enemy to have to go through!

And from that time on, when anybody mentions eternal life, I run away as fast as I can

### *Words and Expressions in 'Eternal Life'*

*Torah* Doctrine or law the name is applied to the five books of Moses *i.e.* the Pentateuch

*tallis* Prayer shawl

*tfullin* Phylacteries

*shlimazl* One to whom unlucky things are always happening, humorously a shlimazl is the person on whom a shlamiel spills the soup

*shammes* Sexton

*T hilm* Psalms of David

*Sholom aleichem* Peace be unto you

*Nu* So what? Well?

*Yom Kippur* Day of Atonement the most important religious holiday one of confession prayer and fasting

*groschen* German silver coin once worth about two cents

*gulden* Austrian silver florin worth about forty eight cents

*kaddish* Mourner's prayer said twice daily in synagogue for one year by male members of family above thirteen

*Hagadah* Book of the Passover service at home much of it deals with the Exodus from Egypt

Men went there every evening at about eleven o'clock, just as they went to the *cafe*. Six or eight of them used to meet there always the same set, not fast men, but respectable tradesmen, and young men in government or some other employ, and they used to drink their Chartreuse, and tease the girls, or else they would talk seriously with Madame, whom everybody respected, and then would go home at twelve o'clock! The younger men would sometimes stay the night.

It was a small, comfortable house, at the corner of a street behind Saint Etienne's church. From the windows one could see the docks, full of ships which were being unloaded, and on the hill the old, gray chapel, dedicated to the Virgin.

Madame, who came of a respectable family of peasant proprietors in the department of the Eure, had taken up her profession, just as she would have become a milliner or dressmaker. The prejudice against prostitution, which is so violent and deeply rooted in large towns, does not exist in the country places in Normandy. The peasant simply says "It is a paying business," and sends his daughter to keep a harem of fast girls, just as he would send her to keep a girls' school.

She had inherited the house from an old uncle, to whom it had belonged. Monsieur and Madame, who had formerly been innkeepers near Yvetot, had immediately sold their house, as they thought that the business at Fecamp was more profitable. They arrived one fine morning to assume the direction of the enterprise, which was declining on account of the absence of a head. They were good people enough in their way, and soon made themselves liked by their staff and their neighbors.

Monsieur died of apoplexy two years later, for as his new profession kept him in idleness and without exercise, he had grown excessively stout, and his health had suffered. Since Madame had been a widow, all the frequenters of the establishment had wanted her, but people said that personally she was quite virtuous, and even the girls in the house could not discover anything against her. She was tall, stout, and affable, and her complexion, which had become pale in the dimness of her house, the shutters of which were scarcely ever opened, shone as if it had been varnished. She had a fringe of curly, false hair, which gave her a juvenile look, which in turn contrasted strongly with her matronly figure. She was always smiling and cheerful, and was fond of a joke, but there was a shade

of reserve about her which her new occupation had not quite made her lose Coarse words always shocked her, and when any young fellow who had been badly brought up called her establishment by its right name, she was angry and disgusted

In a word, she had a refined mind, and although she treated her women as friends, yet she very frequently used to say that she and they were not made of the same stuff

Sometimes during the week she would hire a carriage and take some of her girls into the country, where they used to enjoy themselves on the grass by the side of the little river They behaved like a lot of girls let out from a school, and used to run races, and play childish games They would have a cold dinner on the grass, and drink cider, and go home at night with a delicious feeling of fatigue, and in the carriage kiss Madame as a kind mother who was full of goodness and complaisance

The house had two entrances At the corner there was a sort of low *cafe*, which sailors and the lower orders frequented at night, and she had two girls whose special duty it was to attend to that part of the business With the assistance of the waiter, whose name was Frederic, and who was a short, light-haired, beardless fellow, as strong as a horse, they set the half bottles of wine and the jugs of beer on the shaky marble tables and then, sitting astride on the customers' knees, would urge them to drink

The three other girls (there were only five in all) formed a kind of aristocracy, and were reserved for the company on the first floor, unless they were wanted downstairs, and there was nobody on the first floor The salon of Jupiter, where the tradesmen used to meet, was prepared in blue, and embellished with a large drawing representing Leda stretched out under the swan That room was reached by a winding staircase, which ended at a narrow door opening on to the street, and above it, all night long a little lamp burned, behind wire bars, such as one still sees in some towns, at the foot of the shrine of some saint

The house, which was old and damp, rather smelled of mildew At times there was an odor of eau de Cologne in the passages, or a half-open door downstairs allowed the noise of the common men sitting and drinking downstairs to reach the first floor, much to the disgust of the gentlemen who were there Madame, who was quite familiar with those of her customers with whom she was on friendly terms, did not leave the salon She took much interest in what was going on in the town, and they regularly told her all the news Her serious conversation was a change from the ceaseless chatter of the three women, it was a rest from the doubtful jokes of those stout individuals who every evening indulged in the commonplace amusement of drinking a glass of liquor in company with girls of easy virtue

The names of the girls on the first floor were Fernande, Raphaëlle, and Rosa "the Jade" As the staff was limited, Madame had endeavored that each member of it should be a pattern, an epitome of each feminine type, so that every customer might find, as nearly as possible, the realization of his ideal Fernande represented the handsome blonde, she was very tall,

rather fat, and lazy, a country girl, who could not get rid of her freckles, and whose short, light, almost colorless, tow-like hair, which was like combed-out flax, barely covered her head

Raphaëlle, who came from Marseilles, played the indispensable part of the handsome Jewess. She was thin, with high cheek-bones covered with rouge, and her black hair, which was always covered with pomatum, curled on to her forehead. Her eyes would have been handsome, if the right one had not had a speck in it. Her Roman nose came down over a square jaw, where two false upper teeth contrasted strangely with the bad color of the rest.

Rosa the Jade was a little roll of fat, nearly all stomach, with very short legs. From morning till night she sang songs, which were alternately indecent or sentimental, in a harsh voice, told silly, interminable tales, and only stopped talking in order to eat, or left off eating in order to talk. She was never still, was as active as a squirrel, in spite of her fat and her short legs, and her laugh, which was a torrent of shrill cries, resounded here and there, ceaselessly, in a bedroom, in the loft, in the *café*, everywhere, and always about nothing.

The two women on the ground floor were Louise, who was nicknamed 'la Cocotte,' and Flora, whom they called 'Balanchère,' because she limped a little. The former always dressed as Liberty, with a tri-colored sash, and the other as a Spanish woman, with a string of copper coins, which jingled at every step she took, in her carrotty hair. Both looked like cooks dressed up for the carnival, and were like all other women of the lower orders, neither uglier nor better looking than they usually are. In fact they looked just like servants at an inn, and were generally called "the Two Pumps."

A jealous peace, very rarely disturbed, reigned among these five women, thanks to Madame's conciliatory wisdom and to her constant good humor, and the establishment, which was the only one of the kind in the little town, was very much frequented. Madame had succeeded in giving it such a respectable appearance, she was so amiable and obliging to everybody, her good heart was so well known, that she was treated with a certain amount of consideration. The regular customers spent money on her, and were delighted when she was especially friendly toward them. When they met during the day, they would say "This evening, you know where," just as men say "At the *café*, after dinner." In a word Madame Tellier's house was somewhere to go to, and her customers very rarely missed their daily meetings there.

One evening, toward the end of May, the first arrival, Monsieur Poulin, who was a timber merchant, and had been mayor, found the door shut. The little lantern behind the grating was not alight, there was not a sound in the house, everything seemed dead. He knocked, gently at first, and then more loudly, but nobody answered the door. Then he went slowly up the street, and when he got to the market place, he met Monsieur Duvert, the gun-maker, who was going to the same place, so they went

back together, but did not meet with any better success. But suddenly they heard a loud noise close to them, and on going round the corner of the house, they saw a number of English and French sailors, who were hammering at the closed shutters of the *café* with their fists.

The two tradesmen immediately made their escape, for fear of being compromised, but a low *Pst* stopped them, it was Monsieur Tournevau, the fish-curer, who had recognized them, and was trying to attract their attention. They told him what had happened, and he was all the more vexed at it, as he, a married man, and father of a family, only went there on Saturdays—*securitatis causa*, as he said, alluding to a measure of sanitary policy, which his friend Doctor Borde had advised him to observe. That was his regular evening, and now he would be deprived of it for the whole week.

The three men went as far as the quay together, and on the way they met young Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, who frequented the place regularly, and Monsieur Pinipesse, the collector. They all returned to the Rue aux Juifs together, to make a last attempt. But the exasperated sailors were besieging the house, throwing stones at the shutters, and shouting, and the five first-floor customers went away as quickly as possible, and walked aimlessly about the streets.

Presently they met Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and then Monsieur Vassi, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and they all took a long walk, going to the pier first of all. There they sat down in a row on the granite parapet, and watched the rising tide, and when the promenaders had sat there for some time, Monsieur Tournevau said "This is not very amusing!"

"Decidedly not," Monsieur Pinipesse replied, and they started off to walk again.

After going through the street on the top of the hill, they returned over the wooden bridge which crosses the Retenue, passed close to the railway, and came out again on to the market place, when suddenly a quarrel arose between Monsieur Pinipesse and Monsieur Tournevau, about an edible fungus which one of them declared he had found in the neighborhood.

As they were out of temper already from annoyance, they would very probably have come to blows, if the others had not interfered. Monsieur Pinipesse went off furious, and soon another altercation arose between the ex-mayor, Monsieur Poulin, and Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, on the subject of the tax-collector's salary, and the profits which he might make. Insulting remarks were freely passing between them, when a torrent of formidable cries were heard, and the body of sailors, who were tired of waiting so long outside a closed house, came into the square. They were walking arm-in-arm, two and two, and formed a long procession, and were shouting furiously. The landsmen went and hid themselves under a gateway, and the yelling crew disappeared in the direction of the abbey. For a long time they still heard the noise, which diminished like a storm.

in the distance, and then silence was restored. Monsieur Poulin and Monsieur Dupuis, who were enraged at each other, went in different directions, without wishing each other good-bye.

The other four set off again, and instinctively went in the direction of Madame Tellier's establishment, which was still closed, silent, impenetrable. A quiet, but obstinate, drunken man was knocking at the door of the *café*, then he stopped and called Frederic, the waiter, in a low voice, but finding that he got no answer, he sat down on the doorstep, and awaited the course of events.

The others were just going to retire, when the noisy band of sailors reappeared at the end of the street. The French sailors were shouting the "Marseillaise," and the Englishmen, "Rule Britannia." There was a general lurching against the wall, and then the drunken brutes went on their way toward the quay, where a fight broke out between the two nations, in the course of which an Englishman had his arm broken, and a Frenchman his nose split.

The drunken man, who had stopped outside the door, was crying by this time, as drunken men and children cry when they are vexed, and the others went away. By degrees, calm was restored in the noisy town, here and there at moments, the distant sound of voices could be heard, only to die away in the distance.

One man was still wandering about, Monsieur Tournevau, the fish-curer, who was vexed at having to wait until the next Saturday. He hoped for something to turn up, he did not know what, but he was exasperated at the police for thus allowing an establishment of such public utility, which they had under their control, to be thus closed.

He went back to it, examined the walls, and tried to find out the reason. On the shutter he saw a notice stuck up, so he struck a wax vesta, and read the following, in a large, uneven hand: "Closed on Account of the Confirmation."

Then he went away, as he saw it was useless to remain, and left the drunken man lying on the pavement fast asleep, outside the inhospitable door.

The next day, all the regular customers, one after the other, found some reason for going through the Rue aux Juifs with a bundle of papers under their arm, to keep them in countenance, and with a furtive glance they all read that mysterious notice.

#### CLOSED ON ACCOUNT OF THE CONFIRMATION

#### II

Madame had a brother, who was a carpenter in their native place, Virville, in the department of Eure. When Madame had still kept the inn at Yvetot, she had stood godmother to that brother's daughter, who had received the name of Constance. Constance Rivet, she herself being a Rivet on her father's side. The carpenter, who knew that his sister was in

a good position, did not lose sight of her, although they did not meet often, as they were both kept at home by their occupations, and lived a long way from each other. But when the girl was twelve years old, and about to be confirmed, he seized the opportunity to write to his sister, and ask her to come and be present at the ceremony. Their old parents were dead, and as Madame could not well refuse, she accepted the invitation. Her brother, whose name was Joseph, hoped that by dint of showing his sister attentions, she might be induced to make her will in the girl's favor, as she had no children of her own.

His sister's occupation did not trouble his scruples in the least, and, besides, nobody knew anything about it at Virville. When they spoke of her, they only said "Madame Tellier is living at Fecamp," which might mean that she was living on her own private income. It was quite twenty leagues from Fecamp to Virville, and for a peasant, twenty leagues on land are more than is crossing the ocean to an educated person. The people at Virville had never been further than Rouen, and nothing attracted the people from Fecamp to a village of five hundred houses, in the middle of a plain, and situated in another department. At any rate nothing was known about her business.

But the confirmation was coming on and Madame was in great embarrassment. She had no under-mistress, and did not at all dare to leave her house, even for a day. She feared the rivalries between the girls upstairs and those downstairs would certainly break out, that Frederic would get drunk, for when he was in that state, he would knock anybody down for a mere word. At last, however, she made up her mind to take them all with her, with the exception of the man, to whom she gave a holiday, until the next day but one.

When she asked her brother, he made no objection, but undertook to put them all up for a night. So on Saturday morning the eight o'clock express carried off Madame and her companions in a second-class carriage. As far as Beuzeville they were alone, and chattered like magpies, but at that station a couple got in. The man, an aged peasant dressed in a blue blouse with a folding collar, wide sleeves tight at the wrist, and ornamented with white embroidery, wore an old high hat with long nap. He held an enormous green umbrella in one hand, and a large basket in the other, from which the heads of three frightened ducks protruded. The woman, who sat stiffly in her rustic finery, had a face like a fowl, and with a nose that was as pointed as a bill. She sat down opposite her husband and did not stir, as she was startled at finding herself in such smart company.

There was certainly an array of striking colors in the carriage. Madame was dressed in blue silk from head to foot, and had over her dress a dazzling red shawl of imitation French cashmere. Fernande was panting in a Scottish plaid dress, whose bodice, which her companions had laced as tight as they could, had forced up her falling bosom into a double dome, that was continually heaving up and down, and which seemed liquid beneath the material. Raphaëlle, with a bonnet covered with feathers, so



that it looked like a nest full of birds, had on a lilac dress with gold spots on it, there was something Oriental about it that suited her Jewish face. Rosa the Jade had on a pink petticoat with large flounces, and looked like a very fat child, an obese dwarf, while the Two Pumps looked as if they had cut their dresses out of old, flowered curtains, dating from the Restoration.

Perceiving that they were no longer alone in the compartment, the ladies put on staid looks, and began to talk of subjects which might give the others a high opinion of them. But at Bolbec a gentleman with eight whiskers, with a gold chain, and wearing two or three rings, got in, and put several parcels wrapped in oil cloth into the net over his head. He looked inclined for a joke, and a good-natured fellow.

"Are you ladies changing your quarters?" he asked. The question embarrassed them all considerably. Madame, however, quickly recovered her composure, and said sharply, to avenge the honor of her corps:

"I think you might try to be polite!"

He excused himself, and said: "I beg your pardon, I ought to have said your nunnery."

As Madame could not think of a retort, or perhaps as she thought herself justified sufficiently, she gave him a dignified bow, and pinched in her lips.

Then the gentleman, who was sitting between Rosa the Jade and the old peasant, began to wink knowingly at the ducks, whose heads were sticking out of the basket. When he felt that he had fixed the attention of his public, he began to tickle them under their bills, and spoke funnily to them, to make the company smile.

"We have left our little pond, qu-ack! qu-ack! to make the acquaintance of the little spit, qu-ack! qu-ack!"

The unfortunate creatures turned their necks away to avoid his caresses, and made desperate efforts to get out of their wicker prison, and then, suddenly, all at once, uttered the most lamentable quacks of distress. The women exploded with laughter. They leaned forward and pushed each other, so as to see better, they were very much interested in the ducks, and the gentleman redoubled his airs, his wit, and his teasing.

Rosa joined in, and leaning over her neighbor's legs, she kissed the three animals on the head. Immediately all the girls wanted to kiss them in turn, and the gentleman took them on to his knees, made them jump up and down and pinched them. The two peasants, who were even in greater consternation than their poultry, rolled their eyes as if they were possessed, without venturing to move, and their old wrinkled faces had not a smile nor a movement.

Then the gentleman, who was a commercial traveler, offered the ladies braces by way of a joke and taking up one of his packages, he opened it. It was a trick, for the parcel contained garters. There were blue silk, pink silk, red silk, violet silk, mauve silk garters, and the buckles were made of two gilt metal Cupids, embracing each other. The girls uttered exclamations of delight, and looked at them with that gravity which is natural

to a woman when she is hankering after a bargain. They consulted one another by their looks or in a whisper, and replied in the same manner, and Madame was longingly handling a pair of orange garters that were broader and more imposing than the rest, really fit for the mistress of such an establishment.

"Come, my kittens," he said, "you must try them on."

There was a torrent of exclamations, and they squeezed their petticoats between their legs, as if they thought he was going to ravish them, but he quietly waited his time, and said "Well, if you will not, I shall pack them up again."

And he added cunningly "I offer any pair they like, to those who will try them on."

But they would not, and sat up very straight, and looked dignified.

But the Two Pumps looked so distressed that he renewed the offer to them. Flora especially hesitated, and he pressed her.

"Come, my dear, a little courage! Just look at that lilac pair, it will suit your dress admirably."

That decided her, and pulling up her dress she showed a thick leg fit for a milk-maid, in a badly-fitting, coarse stocking. The commercial traveler stooped down and fastened the garter below the knee first of all and then above it, and he tickled the girl gently, which made her scream and jump. When he had done, he gave her the lilac pair, and asked "Who next?"

"I! I!" they all shouted at once, and he began on Rosa the Jade, who uncovered a shapeless, round thing without any ankle, a regular "sausage of a leg," as Raphaëlle used to say.

The commercial traveler complimented Fernande, and grew quite enthusiastic over her powerful columns.

The thin tibias of the handsome Jewess met with less flattery, and Louise Cocotte, by way of a joke, put her petticoats over the man's head, so that Madame was obliged to interfere to check such unseemly behavior.

Lastly, Madame herself put out her leg, a handsome, muscular, Norman leg, and in his surprise and pleasure the commercial traveler gallantly took off his hat to salute that master calf, like a true French cavalier.

The two peasants, who were speechless from surprise, looked askance, out of the corners of their eyes. They looked so exactly like fowls, that the man with the light whiskers, when he sat up, said "Co—co—ri—co," under their very noses, and that gave rise to another storm of amusement.

The old people got out at Motteville, with their basket, their ducks, and their umbrella, and they heard the woman say to her husband, as they went away:

"They are sluts, who are off to that cursed place, Paris!"

The funny commercial traveler himself got out at Rouen, after behaving so coarsely that Madame was obliged sharply to put him into his right place. She added, as a moral: "This will teach us not to talk to the first comer."

At Oissel they changed trains, and at a little station further on Mon

sieur Joseph Rivet was waiting for them with a large cart with a number of chairs in it, which was drawn by a white horse

The carpenter politely kissed all the ladies, and then helped them into his conveyance

Three of them sat on three chairs at the back, Raphaele, Madame, and her brother on the three chairs in front, and Rosa, who had no seat, settled herself as comfortably as she could on tall Fernande's knees, and then they set off

But the horse's jerky trot shook the cart so terribly, that the chairs began to dance, throwing the travelers into the air, to the right and to the left, as if they had been dancing puppets. This made them make horrible grimaces and screams, which, however, were cut short by another jolt of the cart

They clung to the sides of the vehicle, their bonnets fell on to their backs, their noses on their shoulders, and the white horse trotted on, stretching out his head and holding out his tail quite straight, a little hairless rat's tail, with which he whisked his buttocks from time to time

Joseph Rivet, with one leg on the shafts and the other bent under him, held the reins with elbows high and kept uttering a kind of chuckling sound, which made the horse prick up its ears and go faster

The green country extended on either side of the road, and here and there the colza in flower presented a waving expanse of yellow, from which there arose a strong, wholesome, sweet and penetrating smell, which the wind carried to some distance

The cornflowers showed their little blue heads among the rye, and the women wanted to pick them, but Monsieur Rivet refused to stop

Then sometimes a whole field appeared to be covered with blood, so thickly were the poppies growing, and the cart, which looked as if it were filled with flowers of more brilliant hue, drove on through the fields colored with wild flowers, to disappear behind the trees of a farm, then to reappear and go on again through the yellow or green standing crops studded with red or blue

One o'clock struck as they drove up to the carpenter's door. They were tired out, and very hungry, as they had eaten nothing since they left home. Madame Rivet ran out, and made them alight, one after another, kissing them as soon as they were on the ground. She seemed as if she would never tire of kissing her sister-in-law, whom she apparently wanted to monopolize. They had lunch in the workshop, which had been cleared out for the next day's dinner

A capital omelette, followed by boiled chitterlings, and washed down by good, sharp cider, made them all feel comfortable

Rivet had taken a glass so that he might hob-nob with them, and his wife cooked, waited on them, brought in the dishes, took them out, and asked all of them in a whisper whether they had everything they wanted. A number of boards standing against the walls, and heaps of shavings that had been swept into the corners, gave out the smell of planed wood, of carpentering, that resinous odor which penetrates the lungs

They wanted to see the little girl, but she had gone to church, and would not be back until evening, so they all went out for a stroll in the country

It was a small village, through which the high road passed Ten or a dozen houses on either side of the single street had for tenants the butcher, the grocer, the carpenter, the innkeeper, the shoemaker, and the baker, and others

The church was at the end of the street It was surrounded by a small churchyard, and four enormous lime-trees, which stood just outside the porch, shaded it completely It was built of flint, in no particular style, and had a slated steeple When you got past it, you were in the open country again, which was broken here and there by clumps of trees which hid some homestead

Rivet had given his arm to his sister, out of politeness, although he was in his working clothes, and was walking with her majestically His wife, who was overwhelmed by Raphaëlle's gold-striped dress, was walking between her and Fernande, and rotund Rosa was trotting behind with Louise Cocotte and Flora, the Seesaw, who was limping along, quite tired out

The inhabitants came to their doors, the children left off playing, and a window curtain would be raised, so as to show a muslin cap, while an old woman with a crutch, who was almost blind, crossed herself as if it were a religious procession They all looked for a long time after those handsome ladies from the town, who had come so far to be present at the confirmation of Joseph Rivet's little girl, and the carpenter rose very much in the public estimation

As they passed the church, they heard some children singing, little shrill voices were singing a hymn, but Madame would not let them go in, for fear of disturbing the little cherubs

After a walk, during which Joseph Rivet enumerated the principal landed proprietors, spoke about the yield of the land, and the productiveness of the cows and sheep, he took his flock of women home and installed them in his house, and as it was very small, he had to put them into the rooms, two and two

Just for once, Rivet would sleep in the workshop on the shavings, his wife was going to share her bed with her sister-in-law, and Fernande and Raphaëlle were to sleep together in the next room Louise and Flora were put into the kitchen, where they had a mattress on the floor, and Rosa had a little dark cupboard at the top of the stairs to herself, close to the loft, where the candidate for confirmation was to sleep

When the girl came in, she was overwhelmed with kisses, all the women wished to caress her, with that need of tender expression, that habit of professional wheedling, which had made them kiss the ducks in the railway carriage

They took her on to their laps, stroked her soft, light hair, and pressed her in their arms with vehement and spontaneous outbursts of affection, and the child, who was very good-natured and docile, bore it all patiently

As the day had been a fatiguing one for everybody, they all went to bed soon after dinner. The whole village was wrapped in that perfect stillness of the country, which is almost like a religious silence, and the girls, who were accustomed to the noisy evenings of their establishment, felt rather impressed by the perfect repose of the sleeping village. They shivered, not with cold, but with those little shivers of solitude which come over uneasy and troubled hearts.

As soon as they were in bed, two and two together, they clasped each other in their arms, as if to protect themselves against this feeling of the calm and profound slumber of the earth. But Rosa the Jade, who was alone in her little dark cupboard, felt a vague and painful emotion come over her.

She was tossing about in bed, unable to get to sleep, when she heard the faint sobs of a crying child close to her head, through the partition. She was frightened, and called out, and was answered by a weak voice, broken by sobs. It was the little girl who, being used to sleeping in her mother's room, was frightened in her small attic.

Rosa was delighted, got up softly so as not to awaken anyone, and went and fetched the child. She took her into her warm bed, kissed her and pressed her to her bosom, caressed her, lavished exaggerated manifestations of tenderness on her, and at last grew calmer herself and went to sleep. And till morning, the candidate for confirmation slept with her head on Rosa's naked bosom.

At five o'clock, the little church bell ringing the 'Angelus' woke these women up, who as a rule slept the whole morning long.

The peasants were up already, and the women went busily from house to house, carefully bringing short, starched, muslin dresses in bandboxes, or very long wax tapers, with a bow of silk fringed with gold in the middle, and with dents in the wax for the fingers.

The sun was already high in the blue sky, which still had a rosy tint toward the horizon, like a faint trace of dawn, remaining. Families of fowls were walking about the henhouses, and here and there a black cock, with a glistening breast, raised his head, crowned by his red comb, flapped his wings, and uttered his shrill crow, which the other cocks repeated.

Vehicles of all sorts came from neighboring parishes, and discharged tall, Norman women, in dark dresses, with neck-handkerchiefs crossed over the bosom, and fastened with silver brooches, a hundred years old.

The men had put on blouses over their new frock coats, or over their old dress coats of green cloth, the tails of which hung down below their blouses. When the horses were in the stable, there was a double line of rustic conveyances along the road, carts, cabriolets, tilburies, char-a-bancs, traps of every shape and age, resting on their shafts, or pointing them in the air.

The carpenter's house was as busy as a beehive. The ladies, in dressing jackets and petticoats, with their long, thin, light hair, which looked as if it were faded and worn by dyeing, were busy dressing the child, who was standing motionless on a table, while Madame Tellier was directing the

movements of her battalion They washed her, did her hair, dressed her, and with the help of a number of pins, they arranged the folds of her dress, and took in the waist, which was too large

Then, when she was ready, she was told to sit down and not to move, and the women hurried off to get ready themselves

The church bell began to ring again, and its tinkle was lost in the air, like a feeble voice which is soon drowned in space The candidates came out of the houses, and went toward the parochial building which contained the school and the mansion house This stood quite at one end of the village, while the church was situated at the other

The parents, in their very best clothes, followed their children with awkward looks, and with the clumsy movements of bodies that are always bent at work

The little girls disappeared in a cloud of muslin, which looked like whipped cream, while the lads, who looked like embryo waiters in a *café* and whose heads shone with pomatum, walked with their legs apart, so as not to get any dust or dirt on to their black trousers

It was something for the family to be proud of, a large number of relatives from distant parts surrounded the child, and, consequently, the carpenter's triumph was complete

Madame Tellier's regiment, with its mistress at its head, followed Constance, her father gave his arm to his sister, her mother walked by the side of Raphaele, Fernande with Rosa, and the Two Pumps together Thus they walked majestically through the village, like a general's staff in full uniform, while the effect on the village was startling

At the school the girls arranged themselves under the Sister of Mercy, and the boys under the schoolmaster, and they started off, singing a hymn as they went The boys led the way, in two files, between the two rows of vehicles, from which the horses had been taken out, and the girls followed in the same order As all the people in the village had given the town ladies the precedence out of politeness, they came immediately behind the girls, and lengthened the double line of the procession still more, three on the right and three on the left, while their dresses were as striking as a bouquet of fireworks

When they went into the church, the congregation grew quite excited They pressed against each other, they turned round, they jostled one another in order to see Some of the devout ones almost spoke aloud, so astonished were they at the sight of these ladies, whose dresses were trimmed more elaborately than the priest's chasuble

The Mayor offered them his pew, the first one on the right, close to the choir, and Madame Tellier sat there with her sister-in-law, Fernande and Raphaele, Rosa the Jade, and the Two Pumps occupied the second seat, in company with the carpenter

The choir was full of kneeling children, the girls on one side, and the boys on the other, and the long wax tapers which they held looked like lances, pointing in all directions Three men were standing in front of the lectern, singing as loud as they could

They prolonged the syllables of the sonorous Latin indefinitely, holding on to the *Amens* with interminable *a—a's* which the serpent of the organ kept up in the monotonous, long-drawn-out notes, emitted by the deep-throated pipes

A child's shrill voice took up the reply, and from time to time a priest sitting in a stall and wearing a biretta got up, muttered something, and sat down again. The three singers continued, with their eyes fixed on the big book of plainsong lying open before them on the outstretched wings of an eagle, mounted on a pivot.

Then silence ensued. The service went on, and toward the end of it, Rosa, with her head in both her hands, suddenly thought of her mother, and her village church on a similar occasion. She almost fancied that that day had returned, when she was so small, and almost hidden in her white dress, and she began to cry.

First of all she wept silently, the tears dropped slowly from her eyes, but her emotion increased with her recollections, and she began to sob. She took out her pocket-handkerchief, wiped her eyes, and held it to her mouth, so as not to scream, but it was useless.

A sort of rattle escaped her throat, and she was answered by two other profound, heart-breaking sobs, for her two neighbors, Louise and Flora, who were kneeling near her, overcome by similar recollections, were sobbing by her side. There was a flood of tears, and as weeping is contagious, Madame soon found that her eyes were wet, and on turning to her sister-in-law, she saw that all the occupants of the pew were crying.

Soon, throughout the church, here and there, a wife, a mother, a sister, seized by the strange sympathy of poignant emotion and agitated by the grief of those handsome ladies on their knees, who were shaken by their sobs, was moistening her cambric pocket-handkerchief, and pressing her beating heart with her left hand.

Just as the sparks from an engine will set fire to dry grass, so the tears of Rosa and of her companions infected the whole congregation in a moment. Men, women, old men, and lads in new blouses were soon sobbing, something superhuman seemed to be hovering over their heads—a spirit, the powerful breath of an invisible and all-powerful being.

Suddenly a species of madness seemed to pervade the church, the noise of a crowd in a state of frenzy, a tempest of sobs and of stifled cries. It passed over the people like gusts of wind which bow the trees in a forest, and the priest, overcome by emotion, stammered out incoherent prayers, those inarticulate prayers of the soul, when it soars toward heaven.

The people behind him gradually grew calmer. The cantors, in all the dignity of their white surplices, went on in somewhat uncertain voices, and the organ itself seemed hoarse, as if the instrument had been weeping. The priest, however, raised his hand, as a sign for them to be still, and went to the chancel steps. All were silent, immediately.

After a few remarks on what had just taken place, which he attributed to a miracle, he continued, turning to the seats where the carpenter's guests were sitting.

"I especially thank you, my dear sisters, who have come from such a distance, and whose presence among us, whose evident faith and ardent piety have set such a salutary example to all. You have edified my parish, your emotion has warmed all hearts, without you, this day would not, perhaps, have had this really divine character. It is sufficient, at times, that there should be one chosen to keep in the flock, to make the whole flock blessed."

His voice failed him again, from emotion, and he said no more, but concluded the service.

They all left the church as quickly as possible, the children themselves were restless, tired with such a prolonged tension of the mind. Besides, the elders were hungry, and one after another left the churchyard, to see about dinner.

There was a crowd outside, a noisy crowd, a babel of loud voices, in which the shrill Norman accent was discernible. The villagers formed two ranks, and when the children appeared, each family seized their own.

The whole houseful of women caught hold of Constance, surrounded her and kissed her, and Rosa was especially demonstrative. At last she took hold of one hand, while Madame Tellier held the other, and Raphaele and Fernande held up her long muslin petticoat, so that it might not drag in the dust. Louise and Flora brought up the rear with Madame Rivet, and the child, who was very silent and thoughtful, set off home, in the midst of this guard of honor.

The dinner was served in the workshop, on long boards supported by trestles, and through the open door they could see all the enjoyment that was going on. Everywhere people were feasting, through every window could be seen tables surrounded by people in their Sunday clothes. There was merriment, in every house—men sitting in their shirt sleeves, drinking cider, glass after glass.

In the carpenter's house the gaiety took on somewhat of an air of reserve, the consequence of the emotion of the girls in the morning. Rivet was the only one who was in good cue, and he was drinking to excess. Madame Tellier was looking at the clock every moment, for, in order not to lose two days following, they ought to take the 3.55 train, which would bring them to Fecamp by dark.

The carpenter tried very hard to distract her attention, so as to keep his guests until the next day. But he did not succeed, for she never joked when there was business to be done, and as soon as they had had their coffee she ordered her girls to make haste and get ready. Then, turning to her brother, she said:

"You must have the horse put in immediately," and she herself went to complete her preparations.

When she came down again, her sister-in-law was waiting to speak to her about the child, and a long conversation took place, in which, however, nothing was settled. The carpenter's wife finessed, and pretended to be very much moved, and Madame Tellier, who was holding the girl on her knees, would not pledge herself to anything definite, but merely gave vague



promises she would not forget her, there was plenty of time, and then, they were sure to meet again

But the conveyance did not come to the door, and the women did not come downstairs. Upstairs, they even heard loud laughter, falls, little screams, and much clapping of hands, and so, while the carpenter's wife went to the stable to see whether the cart was ready, Madame went upstairs

Rivet, who was very drunk and half undressed, was vainly trying to kiss Rosa, who was choking with laughter. The Two Pumps were holding him by the arms and trying to calm him, as they were shocked at such a scene after that morning's ceremony, but Raphaele and Fernande were urging him on, writhing and holding their sides with laughter, and they uttered shrill cries at every useless attempt that the drunken fellow made.

The man was furious, his face was red, his dress disordered, and he was trying to shake off the two women who were clinging to him, while he was pulling Rosa's bodice, with all his might, and ejaculating "Won't you, you slut?"

But Madame, who was very indignant, went up to her brother, seized him by the shoulders, and threw him out of the room with such violence that he fell against a wall in the passage, and a minute afterward, they heard him pumping water on to his head in the yard. When he came back with the cart, he was already quite calmed down.

They seated themselves in the same way as they had done the day before, and the little white horse started off with his quick, dancing trot. Under the hot sun, their fun, which had been checked during dinner, broke out again. The girls now were amused at the jolts which the wagon gave, pushed their neighbors' chairs, and burst out laughing every moment, for they were in the vein for it, after Rivet's vain attempt.

There was a haze over the country, the roads were glaring, and dazzled their eyes. The wheels raised up two trails of dust, which followed the cart for a long time along the highroad, and presently Fernande, who was fond of music, asked Rosa to sing something. She boldly struck up the "Gros Curé de Meudon," but Madame made her stop immediately as she thought it a song which was very unsuitable for such a day, and added

"Sing us something of Beranger's."

After a moment's hesitation, Rosa began Beranger's song, "The Grand-mother," in her worn-out voice, and all the girls, and even Madame herself, joined in the chorus

*How I regret  
My dimpled arms,  
My well made legs  
And my vanished charms!*

"That is first-rate," Rivet declared, carried away by the rhythm. They shouted the refrain to every verse, while Rivet beat time on the shafts with his foot, and on the horse's back with the reins. The animal, himself, carried away by the rhythm, broke into a wild gallop, and threw all the

women in a heap, one on top of the other, in the bottom of the conveyance

They got up, laughing as if they were crazy, and the song went on, shouted at the top of their voices, beneath the burning sky and among the ripening grain, to the rapid gallop of the little horse, who set off every time the refrain was sung, and galloped a hundred yards, to their great delight Occasionally a stone breaker by the roadside sat up, and looked at the wild and shouting female load, through his wire spectacles

When they got out at the station, the carpenter said

"I am sorry you are going, we might have had some fun together "

But Madame replied very sensibly "Everything has its right time, and we cannot always be enjoying ourselves "

And then he had a sudden inspiration "Look here, I will come and see you at Fecamp next month " And he gave a knowing look, with his bright and roguish eyes

"Come," Madame said, "you must be sensible, you may come if you like, but you are not to be up to any of your tricks "

He did not reply, and as they heard the whistle of the train he immediately began to kiss them all When it came to Rosa's turn, he tried to get to her mouth, which she, however, smiling with her lips closed, turned away from him each time by a rapid movement of her head to one side He held her in his arms, but he could not attain his object, as his large whip, which he was holding in his hand and waving behind the girl's back in desperation, interfered with his efforts

"Passengers for Rouen, take your seats, please!" a guard cried, and they got in There was a slight whistle followed by a loud one from the engine, which noisily puffed out its first jet of steam, while the wheels began to turn a little, with visible effort Rivet left the station and went to the gate by the side of the line to get another look at Rosa, and as the carriage full of human merchandise passed him, he began to crack his whip and to jump, singing at the top of his voice

*How I regret  
My dimpled arms  
My well made legs  
And my vanished charms!*

And then he watched a white pocket-handkerchief, which somebody was waving, as it disappeared in the distance

### III

They slept the peaceful sleep of quiet consciences, until they got to Rouen When they returned to the house, refreshed and rested, Madame could not help saying

"It was all very well, but I was already longing to get home "

They hurried over their supper, and then, when they had put on their usual light evening costumes, waited for their usual customers The little colored lamp outside the door told the passers-by that the flock had re-

turned to the fold, and in a moment the news spread, nobody knew how, or by whom

Monsieur Philippe, the banker's son, even carried his audacity so far as to send a special messenger to Monsieur Tournevau who was in the bosom of his family

The fish-curer used every Sunday to have several cousins to dinner, and they were having coffee, when a man came in with a letter in his hand Monsieur Tournevau was much excited, he opened the envelope and grew pale, it only contained these words in pencil

*The cargo of fish has been found the ship has come into port good business for you Come immediately*

He felt in his pockets, gave the messenger two sous, and suddenly blushing to his ears, he said "I must go out" He handed his wife the laconic and mysterious note, rang the bell, and when the servant came in, he asked her to bring him his hat and overcoat immediately As soon as he was in the street, he began to run, and the way seemed to him to be twice as long as usual, in consequence of his impatience

Madame Tellier's establishment had put on quite a holiday look On the ground floor, a number of sailors were making a deafening noise, and Louise and Flora drank with one and the other, so as to merit their name of the Two Pumps more than ever They were being called for everywhere at once, already they were not quite sober enough for their business, and the night bid fair to be a very jolly one

The upstairs room was full by nine o'clock Monsieur Vassi, the Judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, Madame's usual Platonic wooer, was talking to her in a corner, in a low voice, and they were both smiling, as if they were about to come to an understanding

Monsieur Poulin, the ex-mayor, was holding Rosa on his knees, and she, with her nose close to his, was running her hands through the old gentleman's white whiskers

Tall Fernande, who was lying on the sofa, had both her feet on Monsieur Pinipesse the tax-collector's stomach, and her back on young Monsieur Philippe's waistcoat, her right arm was round his neck, and she held a cigarette in her left

Raphaëlle appeared to be discussing matters with Monsieur Dupuis, the insurance agent, and she finished by saying "Yes, my dear, I will"

Just then, the door opened suddenly, and Monsieur Tournevau came in He was greeted with enthusiastic cries of "Long live Tournevau!" and Raphaëlle, who was twirling round, went and threw herself into his arms He seized her in a vigorous embrace, and without saying a word, lifting her up as if she had been a feather, he carried her through the room

Rosa was chatting to the ex-mayor, kissing him every moment, and pulling both his whiskers at the same time in order to keep his head straight

Fernande and Madame remained with the four men, and Monsieur Philippe exclaimed "I will pay for some champagne, get three bottles,

Madame Tellier " And Fernande gave him a hug, and whispered to him "Play us a waltz, will you?" So he rose and sat down at the old piano in the corner, and managed to get a hoarse waltz out of the entrails of the instrument

The tall girl put her arms round the tax-collector, Madame asked Monsieur Vassi to take her in his arms, and the two couples turned round, kissing as they danced Monsieur Vassi, who had formerly danced in good society, waltzed with such elegance that Madame was quite captivated

Frederic brought the champagne, the first cork popped, and Monsieur Philippe played the introduction to a quadrille, through which the four dancers walked in society fashion, decorously, with propriety of deportment, with bows, and curtsies, and then they began to drink

Monsieur Philippe next struck up a lively polka, and Monsieur Tourneveau started off with the handsome Jewess, whom he held up in the air, without letting her feet touch the ground Monsieur Pinipesse and Monsieur Vassi had started off with renewed vigor and from time to time one or another couple would stop to toss off a long glass of sparkling wine The dance was threatening to become never-ending, when Rosa opened the door

"I want to dance," she exclaimed And she caught hold of Monsieur Dupuis, who was sitting idle on the couch, and the dance began again

But the bottles were empty "I will pay for one," Monsieur Tourneveau said

"So will I," Monsieur Vassi declared

"And I will do the same," Monsieur Dupuis remarked

They all began to clap their hands, and it soon became a regular ball From time to time, Louise and Flora ran upstairs quickly, had a few turns while their customers downstairs grew impatient, and then they returned regretfully to the *cafe* At midnight they were still dancing

Madame shut her eyes to what was going on, and she had long private talks in corners with Monsieur Vassi, as if to settle the last details of something that had already been agreed upon

At last, at one o'clock, the two married men, Monsieur Tourneveau and Monsieur Pinipesse, declared that they were going home, and wanted to pay Nothing was charged for except the champagne, and that only cost six francs a bottle, instead of ten, which was the usual price, and when they expressed their surprise at such generosity, Madame, who was beaming, said to them

"We don't have a holiday every day "

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village, but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeared of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons, "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted, and the young man pursued his way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done tonight. But no, no, 't would kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth, and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be, and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead, so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman

Brown to himself, and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes ago."

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go, and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs, and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept—"

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans, and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem, and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good

friends, both, and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight I would fain be friends with you for their sake ”

“If it be as thou sayest,” replied Goodman Brown, “I marvel they never spoke of these matters, or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness ”

“Wickedness or not,” said the traveller with the twisted staff, “I have a very general acquaintance here in New England The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me, the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman, and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest The governor and I, too—But these are state secrets ”

“Can this be so?” cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion “Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council, they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day ”

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity, but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy

“Ha! ha! ha!” shouted he again and again, then composing himself, “Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on, but, prithee, don’t kill me with laughing ”

“Well, then, to end the matter at once,” said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, “there is my wife, Faith It would break her dear little heart, and I’d rather break my own ”

“Nay, if that be the case,” answered the other, “e’en go thy ways, Goodman Brown I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm ”

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin

“A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall,” said he “But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going ”

“Be it so,” said his fellow-traveller “Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path ”

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff’s length of the old dame She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words—a prayer, doubtless—as she went The traveller put

forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick

"Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?" cried the good dame "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is But—would your worship believe it?—my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane—"

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it, for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling "

"That can hardly be," answered her friend "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse, but here is my staff, if you will "

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man, and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther

"Friend," said he, stubbornly, 'my mind is made up Not another step will I budge on this errand What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance, composedly "Sit here and rest yourself a while, and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along "

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom The



young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place, but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much devilry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again, and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried

across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of towns-people of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain, and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation, and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth, and sin is but a name. Come, devil, for to thee is this world given."

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal men to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds—the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians, while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him. "Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your devilry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you."

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an

inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune, it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company," quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown, and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends Verse after verse was sung, and still the chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ, and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconcerted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart He could have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell A rampant hag was she And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny My children, look behind you!"

They turned, and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen, the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have revered from youth Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households, how many a woman, eager for widows' weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom, how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their

fathers' wealth, and how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places—whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot Far more than this It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power—than my power at its utmost—can make manifest in deeds And now, my children, look upon each other ”

They did so, and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar

“Lo, there ye stand, my children,” said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race “Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream Now are ye undeceived Evil is the nature of mankind Evil must be your only happiness Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race ”

“Welcome,” repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

“Faith! Faith!” cried the husband, “look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one ”

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not Hardly had he spoken when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp, while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window “What God doth the wizard pray to?” quoth Goodman Brown Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice,

catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will, but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain When the minister spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers Often, waking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith, and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom

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[See the critical comments on this story in the Appendix ]

She flicked her wrist neatly out of Doctor Harry's pudgy careful fingers and pulled the sheet up to her chin. The brat ought to be in knee breeches. Doctoring around the country with spectacles on his nose! 'Get along now, take your schoolbooks and go. There's nothing wrong with me.'

Doctor Harry spread a warm paw like a cushion on her forehead where the forked green vein danced and made her eyelids twitch. "Now, now, be a good girl, and we'll have you up in no time."

"That's no way to speak to a woman nearly eighty years old just because she's down. I'd have you respect your elders, young man."

"Well, Missy, excuse me," Doctor Harry patted her cheek. "But I've got to warn you, haven't I? You're a marvel, but you must be careful or you're going to be good and sorry."

"Don't tell me what I'm going to be. I'm on my feet now, morally speaking. It's Cornelia. I had to go to bed to get rid of her."

Her bones felt loose, and floated around in her skin, and Doctor Harry floated like a balloon around the foot of the bed. He floated and pulled down his waistcoat and swung his glasses on a cord. "Well, stay where you are, it certainly can't hurt you."

"Get along and doctor your sick," said Granny Weatherall. "Leave a well woman alone. I'll call for you when I want you. Where were you forty years ago when I pulled through milk-leg and double pneumonia? You weren't even born. Don't let Cornelia lead you on," she shouted, because Doctor Harry appeared to float up to the ceiling and out. "I pay my own bills, and I don't throw my money away on nonsense!"

She meant to wave good-by, but it was too much trouble. Her eyes closed of themselves, it was like a dark curtain drawn around the bed. The pillow rose and floated under her, pleasant as a hammock in a light wind. She listened to the leaves rustling outside the window. No, somebody was swishing newspapers. No, Cornelia and Doctor Harry were whispering together. She leaped broad awake, thinking they whispered in her ear.

"She was never like this, *never* like this!" "Well, what can we expect?" "Yes, eighty years old."

Well, and what if she was? She still had ears. It was like Cornelia to whisper around doors. She always kept things secret in such a public way.

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She was always being tactful and kind. Cornelia was dutiful, that was the trouble with her. Dutiful and good. "So good and dutiful," said Granny, "that I'd like to spank her." She saw herself spanking Cornelia and making a fine job of it.

"What'd you say, Mother?"

Granny felt her face tying up in hard knots.

"Can't a body think, I'd like to know?"

"I thought you might want something."

"I do. I want a lot of things. First off, go away and don't whisper."

She lay and drowsed, hoping in her sleep that the children would keep out and let her rest a minute. It had been a long day. Not that she was tired. It was always pleasant to snatch a minute now and then. There was always so much to be done, let me see, tomorrow.

Tomorrow was far away and there was nothing to trouble about. Things were finished somehow when the time came, thank God there was always a little margin over for peace, then a person could spread out the plan of life and tuck in the edges orderly. It was good to have everything clean and folded away, with the hair brushes and tonic bottles sitting straight on the white embroidered linen, the day started without fuss and the pantry shelves laid out with rows of jelly glasses and brown jugs and white stone-china jars with blue whirligigs and words painted on them, coffee, tea, sugar, ginger, cinnamon, allspice, and the bronze clock with the lion on top nicely dusted off. The dust that lion could collect in twenty-four hours! The box in the attic with all those letters tied up, well, she'd have to go through that tomorrow. All those letters—George's letters and John's letters and her letters to them both—lying around for the children to find afterwards made her uneasy. Yes, that would be tomorrow's business. No use to let them know how silly she had been once.

While she was rummaging around she found death in her mind and it felt clammy and unfamiliar. She had spent so much time preparing for death there was no need for bringing it up again. Let it take care of itself now. When she was sixty she had felt very old, finished, and went around making farewell trips to see her children and grandchildren, with a secret in her mind. This is the very last of your mother, children! Then she made her will and came down with a long fever. That was all just a notion like a lot of other things, but it was lucky too, for she had once for all got over the idea of dying for a long time. Now she couldn't be worried. She hoped she had better sense now. Her father had lived to be one hundred and two years old and had drunk a noggin of strong hot toddy on his last birthday. He told the reporters it was his daily habit, and he owed his long life to that. He had made quite a scandal and was very pleased about it. She believed she'd just plague Cornelia a little.

"Cornelia! Cornelia!" No footsteps, but a sudden hand on her cheek. "Bless you, where have you been?"

"Here, mother."

"Well, Cornelia, I want a noggin of hot toddy."

"Are you cold, darling?"



"I'm chilly, Cornelia Lying in bed stops the circulation I must have told you that a thousand times"

Well, she could just hear Cornelia telling her husband that Mother was getting a little childish and they'd have to humor her The thing that most annoyed her was that Cornelia thought she was deaf, dumb, and blind Little hasty glances and tiny gestures tossed around her and over her head saying, "Don't cross her, let her have her way, she's eighty years old," and she sitting there as if she lived in a thin glass cage Sometimes Granny almost made up her mind to pack up and move back to her own house where nobody could remind her every minute that she was old Wait, wait, Cornelia, till your own children whisper behind your back!

In her day she had kept a better house and had got more work done She wasn't too old yet for Lydia to be driving eighty miles for advice when one of the children jumped the track, and Jimmy still dropped in and talked things over "Now, Mammy, you've a good business head, I want to know what you think of this?" Old Cornelia couldn't change the furniture around without asking Little things, little things! They had been so sweet when they were little Granny wished the old days were back again with the children young and everything to be done over It had been a hard pull, but not too much for her When she thought of all the food she had cooked, and all the clothes she had cut and sewed, and all the gardens she had made—well, the children showed it There they were, made out of her, and they couldn't get away from that Sometimes she wanted to see John again and point to them and say, Well, I didn't do so badly, did I? But that would have to wait That was for tomorrow She used to think of him as a man, but now all the children were older than their father, and he would be a child beside her if she saw him now It seemed strange and there was something wrong in the idea Why, he couldn't possibly recognize her She had fenced in a hundred acres once, digging the post holes herself and clamping the wires with just a negro boy to help That changed a woman John would be looking for a young woman with the peaked Spanish comb in her hair and the painted fan Digging post holes changed a woman Riding country roads in the winter when women had their babies was another thing sitting up nights with sick horses and sick negroes and sick children and hardly ever losing one John, I hardly ever lost one of them! John would see that in a minute, that would be something he could understand, she wouldn't have to explain anything!

It made her feel like rolling up her sleeves and putting the whole place to rights again No matter if Cornelia was determined to be everywhere at once, there were a great many things left undone on this place She would start tomorrow and do them It was good to be strong enough for everything, even if all you made melted and changed and slipped under your hands, so that by the time you finished you almost forgot what you were working for What was it I set out to do? she asked herself intently but she could not remember A fog rose over the valley, she saw it marching across the creek swallowing the trees and moving up the hill like an

army of ghosts Soon it would be at the near edge of the orchard, and then it was time to go in and light the lamps Come in, children, don't stay out in the night air

Lighting the lamps had been beautiful The children huddled up to her and breathed like little calves waiting at the bars in the twilight Their eyes followed the match and watched the flame rise and settle in a blue curve, then they moved away from her The lamp was lit, they didn't have to be scared and hang on to mother any more Never, never, never more God, for all my life I thank Thee Without Thee, my God, I could never have done it Hail, Mary, full of grace

I want you to pick up all the fruit this year and see that nothing is wasted There's always someone who can use it Don't let good things rot for want of using You waste life when you waste good food Don't let things get lost It's bitter to lose things Now, don't let me get to thinking, not when I am tired and taking a little nap before supper

The pillow rose about her shoulders and pressed against her heart and the memory was being squeezed out of it oh, push down the pillow, somebody it would smother her if she tried to hold it Such a fresh breeze blowing and such a green day with no threats in it But he had not come, just the same What does a woman do when she has put on the white veil and set out the white cake for a man and he doesn't come? She tried to remember No, I swear he never harmed me but in that He never harmed me but in that and what if he did? There was the day, the day, but a whirl of dark smoke rose and covered it, crept up and over into the bright field where everything was planted so carefully in orderly rows That was hell, she knew hell when she saw it For sixty years she had prayed against remembering him and against losing her soul in the deep pit of hell, and now the two things were mingled in one and the thought of him was a smoky cloud from hell that moved and crept in her head when she had just got rid of Doctor Harry and was trying to rest a minute Wounded vanity, Ellen, said a sharp voice in the top of her mind Don't let your wounded vanity get the upper hand of you Plenty of girls get jilted You were jilted, weren't you? Then stand up to it Her eyelids wavered and let in streamers of blue-gray light like tissue paper over her eyes She must get up and pull the shades down or she'd never sleep She was in bed again and the shades were not down How could that happen? Better turn over, hide from the light, sleeping in that light gave you nightmares "Mother, how do you feel now?" and a stinging wetness on her forehead But I don't like having my face washed in cold water!

Hapsy? George? Lydia? Jimmy? No, Cornelia, and her features were swollen and full of little puddles "They're coming, darling, they'll all be here soon" Go wash your face, child, you look funny

Instead of obeying, Cornelia knelt down and put her head on the pillow She seemed to be talking but there was no sound "Well, are you tongue-tied? Whose birthday is it? Are you going to give a party?"

Cornelia's mouth moved urgently in strange shapes "Don't do that, you bother me, daughter"

"Oh, no, Mother Oh, no "

Nonsense It was strange about children They disputed your every word "No what, Cornelia?"

"Here's Doctor Harry "

"I won't see that boy again He just left five minutes ago "

"That was this morning, Mother It's night now Here's the nurse "

"This is Doctor Harry, Mrs Weatherall I never saw you look so young and happy!"

"Ah, I'll never be young again—but I'd be happy if they'd let me lie in peace and get rested "

She thought she spoke up loudly, but no one answered A warm weight on her forehead, a warm bracelet on her wrist, and a breeze went on whispering, trying to tell her something A shuffle of leaves in the everlasting hand of God, He blew on them and they danced and rattled "Mother, don't mind, we're going to give you a little hypodermic " "Look here, daughter, how do ants get in this bed? I saw sugar ants yesterday " Did you send for Hapsy too?

It was Hapsy she really wanted She had to go a long way back through a great many rooms to find Hapsy standing with a baby on her arm She seemed to herself to be Hapsy also, and the baby on Hapsy's arm was Hapsy and himself and herself, all at once, and there was no surprise in the meeting Then Hapsy melted from within and turned flimsy as gray gauze and the baby was a gauzy shadow, and Hapsy came up close and said, "I thought you'd never come," and looked at her very searchingly and said, "You haven't changed a bit!" They leaned forward to kiss, when Cornelia began whispering from a long way off, "Oh, is there anything you want to tell me? Is there anything I can do for you?"

Yes, she had changed her mind after sixty years and she would like to see George I want you to find George Find him and be sure to tell him I forgot him I want him to know I had my husband just the same and my children and my house like any other woman A good house too and a good husband that I loved and fine children out of him Better than I hoped for even Tell him I was given back everything he took away and more Oh, no, oh, God, no, there was something else besides the house and the man and the children Oh, surely they were not all? What was it? Something not given back Her breath crowded down under her ribs and grew into a monstrous frightening shape with cutting edges, it bored up into her head, and the agony was unbelievable Yes, John, get the doctor now, no more talk, my time has come

When this one was born it should be the last The last It should have been born first, for it was the one she had truly wanted Everything came in good time Nothing left out, left over She was strong, in three days she would be as well as ever Better A woman needed milk in her to have her full health

"Mother, do you hear me?"

"I've been telling you—"

"Mother, Father Connolly's here "

"I went to Holy Communion only last week Tell him I'm not so sinful as all that "

"Father just wants to speak to you "

He could speak as much as he pleased It was like him to drop in and inquire about her soul as if it were a teething baby, and then stay for a cup of tea and a round of cards and gossip He always had a funny story of some sort, usually about an Irishman who made his little mistakes and confessed them, and the point lay in some absurd thing he would blurt out in the confessional showing his struggles between native piety and original sin Granny felt easy about her soul Cornelia, where are your manners? Give Father Connolly a chair She had her secret comfortable understanding with a few favorite saints who cleared a straight road to God for her All as surely signed and sealed as the papers for the new Forty Acres Forever heirs and assigns forever Since the day the wedding cake was not cut, but thrown out and wasted The whole bottom dropped out of the world, and there she was blind and sweating with nothing under her feet and the walls falling away His hand had caught her under the breast, she had not fallen, there was the freshly polished floor with the green rug on it, just as before He had cursed like a sailor's parrot and said, "I'll kill him for you ' Don't lay a hand on him, for my sake leave something to God "Now, Ellen, you must believe what I tell you "

So there was nothing, nothing to worry about any more, except sometimes in the night one of the children screamed in a nightmare, and they both hustled out shaking and hunting for the matches and calling, "There, wait a minute, here we are!" John, get the doctor now, Hapsy's time has come But there was Hapsy standing by the bed in a white cap "Cornelia, tell Hapsy to take off her cap I can't see her plain "

Her eyes opened very wide and the room stood out like a picture she had seen somewhere Dark colors with the shadows rising towards the ceiling in long angles The tall black dresser gleamed with nothing on it but John's picture, enlarged from a little one, with John's eyes very black when they should have been blue You never saw him, so how do you know how he looked? But the man insisted the copy was perfect, it was very rich and handsome For a picture, yes, but it's not my husband The table by the bed had a linen cover and a candle and a crucifix The light was blue from Cornelia's silk lampshades No sort of light at all, just frippery You had to live forty years with kerosene lamps to appreciate honest electricity She felt very strong and she saw Doctor Harry with a rosy nimbus around him

"You look like a saint, Doctor Harry, and I vow that's as near as you'll ever come to it "

"She's saying something "

"I heard you, Cornelia What's all this carrying-on?"

"Father Connolly's saying—"

Cornelia's voice staggered and bumped like a cart in a bad road It rounded corners and turned back again and arrived nowhere Granny stepped up in the cart very lightly and reached for the reins, but a man sat

beside her and she knew him by his hands, driving the cart. She did not look in his face, for she knew without seeing, but looked instead down the road where the trees leaned over and bowed to each other and a thousand birds were singing a Mass. She felt like singing too, but she put her hand in the bosom of her dress and pulled out a rosary, and Father Connolly murmured Latin in a very solemn voice and tickled her feet. My God, will you stop that nonsense? I'm a married woman. What if he did run away and leave me to face the priest by myself? I found another whole world better. I wouldn't have exchanged my husband for anybody except St. Michael himself, and you may tell him that for me with a thank you in the bargain.

Light flashed on her closed eyelids, and a deep roaring shook her. Cornelia, is that lightning? I hear thunder. There's going to be a storm. Close all the windows. Call the children in. "Mother, here we are, all of us." "Is that you, Hapsy?" "Oh, no, I'm Lydia. We drove as fast as we could." Their faces drifted above her, drifted away. The rosary fell out of her hands and Lydia put it back. Jimmy tried to help, their hands fumbled together, and Granny closed two fingers around Jimmy's thumb. Beads wouldn't do, it must be something alive. She was so amazed her thoughts ran round and round. So, my dear Lord, this is my death and I wasn't even thinking about it. My children have come to see me die. But I can't, it's not time. Oh, I always hated surprises. I wanted to give Cornelia the amethyst set—Cornelia, you're to have the amethyst set, but Hapsy's to wear it when she wants, and, Doctor Harry, do shut up. Nobody sent for you. Oh, my dear Lord, do wait a minute. I meant to do something about the Forty Acres, Jimmy doesn't need it and Lydia will later on, with that worthless husband of hers. I meant to finish the altar cloth and send six bottles of wine to Sister Borgia for her dyspepsia. I want to send six bottles of wine to Sister Borgia, Father Connolly, now don't let me forget.

Cornelia's voice made short turns and tilted over and crashed. "Oh, Mother, oh, Mother, oh, Mother."

"I'm not going, Cornelia. I'm taken by surprise. I can't go."

You'll see Hapsy again. What about her? "I thought you'd never come." Granny made a long journey outward, looking for Hapsy. What if I don't find her? What then? Her heart sank down and down, there was no bottom to death, she couldn't come to the end of it. The blue light from Cornelia's lampshade drew into a tiny point in the center of her brain, it flickered and winked like an eye, quietly it fluttered and dwindled. Granny lay curled down within herself, amazed and watchful, staring at the point of light that was herself, her body was now only a deeper mass of shadow in an endless darkness and this darkness would curl around the light and swallow it up. God, give a sign!

For the second time there was no sign. Again no bridegroom and the priest in the house. She could not remember any other sorrow because this grief wiped them all away. Oh, no, there's nothing more cruel than this—I'll never forgive it. She stretched herself with a deep breath and blew out the light.

Father Udovic placed the envelope before the Bishop and stepped back. He gave the Bishop more than enough time to read what was written on the envelope, time to digest *The Pope* and, down in the corner, the *Personal*, and then he stepped forward. "It was in the collection yesterday," he said. "At Cathedral."

"Peter's Pence, Father?"

Father Udovic nodded. He'd checked that it had been in with the special Peter's Pence envelopes, and not with the regular Sunday ones.

"Well, then . . ." The Bishop's right hand opened over the envelope, then stopped, and came to roost again, uneasily, on the edge of the desk.

Father Udovic shifted a foot, popped a knuckle in his big toe. The envelope was a bad thing all right. They'd never received anything like it. The Bishop was doing what Father Udovic had done when confronted by the envelope, thinking twice, which was what Monsignor Renton at Cathedral had done, and his curates before him, and his housekeeper who counted the collection. In the end, each had seen the envelope as a hot potato and passed it on. But the Bishop couldn't do that. He didn't know *what* might be inside. Even Father Udovic, who had held it up to a strong light, didn't know. That was the hell of it.

The Bishop continued to stare at the envelope. He still hadn't touched it.

"It beats me," said Father Udovic, moving backwards. He sank down on the leather sofa.

"Was there something else, Father?"

Father Udovic got up quickly and went out of the office—wondering how the Bishop would handle the problem, disappointed that he evidently meant to handle it by himself. In a way, Father Udovic felt responsible. It had been his idea to popularize the age-old collection—"to personalize Peter's Pence"—by moving the day for it ahead a month so that the Bishop, who was going to Rome, would be able to present the proceeds to the Holy Father personally. There had been opposition from the very first. Monsignor Renton, the rector at Cathedral, and one of those at table when Father Udovic proposed his plan, was ill-disposed to it (as he was to Father Udovic himself) and had almost killed it with his comment, "Smart promotion, Bruno." (Monsignor Renton's superior attitude was understandable. He'd had Father Udovic's job, that of chancellor of the

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diocese, years ago, under an earlier bishop ) But Father Udovic had won out The Bishop had written a letter incorporating Father Udovic's idea The plan had been poorly received in some rectories, which was to be expected since it disturbed the routine schedule of special collections Father Udovic, however, had been confident that the people, properly appealed to, could do better than in the past with Peter's Pence And the first returns, which had reached him that afternoon, were reassuring—whatever the envelope might be

It was still on the Bishop's desk the next day, off to one side, and it was there on the day after On the following day, Thursday, it was in the "In" section of his file basket On Friday it was still there, buried Obviously the Bishop was stumped

On Saturday morning, however, it was back on the desk Father Udovic, called in for consultation, had a feeling, a really satisfying feeling, that the Bishop might have need of him If so, he would be ready He had a plan He sat down on the sofa

"It's about this," the Bishop said, glancing down at the envelope before him "I wonder if you can locate the sender "

"I'll do my best," said Father Udovic He paused to consider whether it would be better just to go and do his best, or to present his plan of operation to the Bishop for approval But the Bishop, not turning to him at all, was outlining what he wanted done And it was Father Udovic's own plan! The Cathedral priests at their Sunday Masses should request the sender of the envelope to report to the sacristy afterwards The sender should be assured that the contents would be turned over to the Holy Father, if possible

"Providing, of course," said Father Udovic, standing and trying to get into the act, "it's not something "

"Providing it's possible to do so "

Father Udovic tried not to look sad The Bishop might express himself better, but he was saying nothing that hadn't occurred to Father Udovic first, days before It was pretty discouraging

He retreated to the outer office and went to work on a memo of their conversation Drafting letters and announcements was the hardest part of his job for him He tended to go astray without a memo, to take up with the tempting cliches that came to him in the act of composition and sometimes perverted the Bishop's true meaning Later that morning he called Monsignor Renton and read him the product of many revisions, the two sentences

"Okay," said Monsignor Renton "I'll stick it in the bulletin Thanks a lot "

As soon as Father Udovic hung up, he doubted that that was what the Bishop wanted He consulted the memo The Bishop was very anxious that "not too much be made of this matter" Naturally, Monsignor Renton wanted the item for his parish bulletin He was hard up At one time he had produced the best bulletin in the diocese, but now he was written out, quoting more and more from the magazines and even from the papal

encyclicals Father Udovic called Monsignor Renton back and asked that the announcement be kept out of print. It would be enough to read it once over lightly from the pulpit, using Father Udovic's version because it said enough without saying too much and was, he implied, authorized by the Bishop. Whoever the announcement concerned would comprehend it. If published, the announcement would be subject to study and private interpretation. "Announcements from the pulpit are soon forgotten," Father Udovic said. "I mean—by the people they don't concern."

"You were right the first time, Bruno," said Monsignor Renton. He sounded sore.

The next day—Sunday—Father Udovic stayed home, expecting a call from Monsignor Renton, or possibly even a visit. There was nothing. That evening he called the Cathedral rectory and got one of the curates. Monsignor Renton wasn't expected in until very late. The curate had made the announcement at his two Masses, but no one had come to him about it. "Yes, Father, as you say, it's quite possible someone came to Monsignor about it. Probably he didn't consider it important enough to call you about."

*"Not important?"*

"Not important enough to call *you* about, Father. On Sunday."

"I see," said Father Udovic mildly. It was good to know that the curate, after almost a year of listening to Monsignor Renton, was still respectful. Some of the men out in parishes said Father Udovic's job was a snap and maintained that he'd landed it only because he employed the touch system of typing. Before hanging up, Father Udovic stressed the importance of resolving the question of the envelope, but somehow (words played tricks on him) he sounded as though he were accusing the curate of indifference. What a change! The curate didn't take criticism very well, as became all too clear from his sullen silence, and he wasn't very loyal. When Father Udovic suggested that Monsignor Renton might have neglected to make the announcement at his Masses, the curate readily agreed. "Could've slipped his mind all right. I guess you know what that's like."

Early the next morning Father Udovic was in touch with Monsignor Renton, beginning significantly with a glowing report on the Peter's Pence collection, but the conversation languished, and finally he had to ask about the announcement.

"Nobody showed," Monsignor Renton said in an annoyed voice. "What d'ya want to do about it?"

"Nothing right now," said Father Udovic, and hung up. If there had been a failure in the line of communication, he thought he knew where it was.

The envelope had reposed on the Bishop's desk over the weekend and through most of Monday. But that afternoon Father Udovic, on one of his appearances in the Bishop's office, noticed that it was gone. As soon as the Bishop left for the day, Father Udovic rushed in, looking first in the wastebasket, then among the sealed outgoing letters, for a moment actually



expecting to see a fat one addressed in the Bishop's hand to the Apostolic Delegate. When he uncovered the envelope in the "Out" section of the file basket, he wondered at himself for looking in the other places first. The envelope had to be filed somewhere—a separate folder would be best—but Father Udovic didn't file it. He carried it to his desk. There, sitting down to it in the gloom of the outer office, weighing, feeling, smelling the envelope, he succumbed entirely to his first fears. He remembered the parable of the cockle. "An enemy hath done this." An enemy was plotting to disturb the peace of the diocese, to employ the Bishop as an agent against himself, or against some other innocent person, some unsuspecting priest or nun—yes, against Father Udovic. Why him? Why not? Only a diseased mind would contemplate such a scheme, Father Udovic thought, but that didn't make it less likely. And the sender, whoever he was, doubtless anonymous and judging others by himself, would assume that the envelope had already been opened and that the announcement was calculated to catch him. Such a person would never come forward.

Father Udovic's fingers tightened on the envelope. He could rip it open, but he wouldn't. That evening, enjoying instant coffee in his room, he could steam it open. But he wouldn't. In the beginning, the envelope might have been opened. It would have been so easy, pardonable then. Monsignor Renton's housekeeper might have done it. With the Bishop honoring the name on the envelope and the intentions of whoever wrote it, up to a point anyway, there was now a principle operating that just couldn't be bucked. Monsignor Renton could have it his way.

That evening Father Udovic called him and asked that the announcement appear in the bulletin.

"Okay. I'll stick it in. It wouldn't surprise me if we got some action now."

"I hope so," said Father Udovic, utterly convinced that Monsignor Renton had failed him before. "Do you mind taking it down verbatim this time?"

"Not at all."

In the next bulletin, an advance copy of which came to Father Udovic through the courtesy of Monsignor Renton, the announcement appeared in an expanded, unauthorized version.

The result on Sunday was no different.

During the following week, Father Udovic considered the possibility that the sender was a floater and thought of having the announcement broadcast from every pulpit in the diocese. He would need the Bishop's permission for that, though, and he didn't dare to ask for something he probably wouldn't get. The Bishop had instructed him not to make too much of the matter. The sender would have to be found at Cathedral, or not at all. If not at all, Father Udovic, having done his best, would understand that he wasn't supposed to know any more about the envelope than he did. He would file it away, and some other chancellor, some other

bishop, perhaps, would inherit it. The envelope was most likely harmless anyway, but Father Udovic wasn't so much relieved as bored by the probability that some poor soul was trusting the Bishop to put the envelope into the hands of the Holy Father, hoping for rosary beads blessed by him, or for his autographed picture, and enclosing a small offering, perhaps a spiritual bouquet. Toward the end of the week, Father Udovic told the Bishop that he liked to think that the envelope contained a spiritual bouquet from a little child, and that its contents had already been delivered, so to speak, its prayers and communions already credited to the Holy Father's account in heaven.

"I must say I hadn't thought of that," said the Bishop.

Unfortunately for his peace of mind Father Udovic wasn't always able to believe that the sender was a little child.

The most persistent of those coming to him in reverie was a middle-aged woman saying she hadn't received a special Peter's Pence envelope, had been out of town a few weeks, and so hadn't heard or read the announcement. When Father Udovic tried her on the meaning of the *Personal* on the envelope, however, the woman just went away, and so did all the other suspects under questioning—except one. This was a rich old man suffering from scrupulosity. He wanted his alms to be in secret, as it said in Scripture, lest he be deprived of his eternal reward, but not *entirely* in secret. That was as far as Father Udovic could figure the old man. Who was he? An audacious old Protestant who hated communism, or could some future Knight of St. Gregory be taking his first awkward step? The old man was pretty hard to believe in, and the handwriting on the envelope sometimes struck Father Udovic as that of a woman. This wasn't necessarily bad. Women controlled the nation's wealth. He'd seen the figures on it. The explanation was simple: widows. Perhaps they hadn't taken the right tone in the announcement. Father Udovic's version had been safe and cold, Monsignor Renton's like a summons. It might have been emphasized that the Bishop, under certain circumstances, would *gladly* undertake to deliver the envelope. That might have made a difference. The sender would not only have to appreciate the difficulty of the Bishop's position, but abandon his own. That wouldn't be easy for the sort of person Father Udovic had in mind. He had a feeling that it wasn't going to happen. The Bishop would leave for Rome on the following Tuesday. So time was running out. The envelope could contain a check—quite the cruelest thought—on which payment would be stopped after a limited time by the donor, whom Father Udovic persistently saw as an old person not to be dictated to, or it could be nullified even sooner by untimely death. God, what a shame! In Rome, where the needs of the world, temporal as well as spiritual, were so well known, the Bishop would've been welcome as the flowers in May.

And then, having come full circle, Father Udovic would be hard on himself for dreaming and see the envelope as a whited sepulcher concealing all manner of filth, spelled out in letters snipped from newsprint and calculated to shake Rome's faith in him. It was then that he par-

ticularly liked to think of the sender as a little child. But soon the middle-aged woman would be back, and all the others, among whom the hottest suspect was a feeble-minded nun—devils all to pester him, and the last was always worse than the first. For he always ended up with the old man—and what if there was such an old man?

On Saturday, Father Udovic called Monsignor Renton and asked him to run the announcement again. It was all they could do, he said, and admitted that he had little hope of success.

"Don't let it throw you, Bruno. It's always darkest before dawn."

Father Udovic said he no longer cared. He said he liked to think that the envelope contained a spiritual bouquet from a little child, that its contents had already been delivered, its prayers and communions already.

"You should've been a nun, Bruno."

"Not sure I know what you mean," Father Udovic said, and hung up. He wished it were in his power to do something about Monsignor Renton. Some of the old ones got funny when they stayed too long in one place.

On Sunday, after the eight o'clock Mass, Father Udovic received a call from Monsignor Renton. "I told 'em if somebody didn't own up to the envelope, we'd open it. I guess I got carried away." But it had worked. Monsignor Renton had just talked with the party responsible for the envelope—a Mrs. Anton—and she was on the way over to see Father Udovic.

"A woman, huh?"

"A widow. That's about all I know about her."

"A widow, huh? Did she say what was in it?"

"I'm afraid it's not what you thought, Bruno. It's money."

Father Udovic returned to the front parlor, where he had left Mrs. Anton. "The Bishop'll see you," he said, and sat down. She wasn't making a good impression on him. She could've used a shave. When she'd asked for the Bishop, Father Udovic had replied instinctively, "He's busy," but it hadn't convinced her. She had appeared quite capable of walking out on him. He invoked the Bishop's name again. "Now one of the things the Bishop'll want to know is why you didn't show up before this."

Mrs. Anton gazed at him, then past him, as she had when he'd tried to question her. He saw her starting to get up, and thought he was about to lose her. He hadn't heard the Bishop enter the room.

The Bishop waved Mrs. Anton down, seated himself near the doorway at some distance from them, and motioned to Father Udovic to continue.

To the Bishop it might sound like browbeating, but Father Udovic meant to go on being firm with Mrs. Anton. He hadn't forgotten that she'd responded to Monsignor Renton's threats. "Why'd you wait so long? You listen to the Sunday announcements, don't you?" If she persisted in ignoring him, she could make him look bad, of course, but he didn't look for her to do that, with the Bishop present.

Calmly Mrs Anton spoke, but not to Father Udovic "Call off your trip?"

The Bishop shook his head

In Father Udovic's opinion, it was one of his functions to protect the Bishop from directness of that sort "How do we know what's in here?" he demanded Here, unfortunately, he reached up the wrong sleeve of his cassock for the envelope Then he had it "What's in here? Money?" He knew from Monsignor Renton that the envelope contained money, but he hadn't told the Bishop, and so it probably sounded rash to him Father Udovic could feel the Bishop disapproving of him, and Mrs Anton still hadn't answered the question

"Maybe you should return the envelope to Mrs Anton, Father," said the Bishop

That did it for Mrs Anton "It's got a dollar in it," she said

Father Udovic glanced at the Bishop The Bishop was adjusting his cuffs This was something he did at funerals and public gatherings It meant that things had gone on too long Father Udovic's fingers were sticking to the envelope He still couldn't believe it "Feels like there's more than that," he said

"I wrapped it up good in paper "

"You didn't write a letter or anything?"

"Was I supposed to?"

Father Udovic came down on her 'You were supposed to do what everybody else did You were supposed to use the envelopes we had printed up for the purpose " He went back a few steps in his mind "You told Monsignor Renton what was in the envelope?"

"Yes "

"Did you tell him how much?"

"No "

"Why not?"

'He didn't ask me "

And *he* didn't have to, thought Father Udovic One look at Mrs Anton and Monsignor Renton would know Parish priests got to know such things They were like weight-guessers, for whom it was only a question of ounces Monsignor Renton shouldn't have passed Mrs Anton on He had opposed the plan to personalize Peter's Pence, but who would have thought he'd go to such lengths to get even with Father Udovic? It was sabotage Father Udovic held out the envelope and pointed to the *Personal* on it "What do you mean by that?" Here was where the creatures of his dreams had always gone away He leaned forward for the answer

Mrs Anton leaned forward to give it "I mean I don't want somebody else takin' all the credit with the Holy Father!"

Father Udovic sank back It had been bad before, when she'd ignored him, but now it was worse She was attacking the Bishop If there were only a way to *prove* she was out of her mind, if only she'd say something that would make all her remarks acceptable in retrospect "How's

the Holy Father gonna know who this dollar came from if you didn't write anything?"

"I wrote my name and address on it In ink "

"All right, Father," said the Bishop He stood up and almost went out of the room before he stopped and looked back at Mrs Anton "Why don't you send it by regular mail?"

"He'd never see it! That's why! Some flunky'd get hold of it! Same as here! Oh, don't I know!"

The Bishop walked out, leaving them together—with the envelope

In the next few moments, although Father Udovic knew he had an obligation to instruct Mrs Anton, and had the text for it—"When thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee"—he despaired He realized that they had needed each other to arrive at their sorry state It seemed to him, sitting saying nothing, that they saw each other as two people who d sinned together on earth might see each other in hell, unchastened even then, only blaming each other for what had happened

Revolutions? I never had any interest in them. A man in my position have to mind his job and not bother about what other people are doing. Besides, I never could see what good they did anybody, and I see more of that kind of thing than most people. A watchman have to be out at all hours in all kinds of weather. He have to keep his eyes open. All I ever seen out of things like that was the damage. And who pays for the damage? You and me and people like us, so that one set of jackeens can get in instead of another set of jackeens. What is it to me who's in or out? All I know is that I have to pay for the damage they do.

I remember well the first one I saw. It was a holiday, and when I turned up to the depot, I was told there was a tram after breaking down in town, and I was to go in and keep an eye on it. A lot of the staff was at the races, and it might be a couple of hours before they could get a breakdown gang. So I took my lunch and away with me into town. It was a nice spring day and I thought I might as well walk.

Mind you, I noticed nothing strange, only that the streets were a bit empty, but it struck me that a lot of people were away for the day. Then all at once, just as I got to town, I noticed a handful of them Volunteer boys in the street. Some of them had green uniforms with slouch hats, more of them had nothing only belts and bandoliers. All of them had guns of one sort or another. I paid no attention. Seeing that it was a holiday, I thought they might be on some sort of manoeuvre. They were a crowd I never had anything to do with. As I say, I'm a man that minds his own business.

Suddenly, one of them raises his gun and halts me.

"Halt!" says he. "Where are you bound for, mate?"

"Just down here, to keep an eye on a tram," I said, taking it in good parts.

"A tram?" says he. "That's the very thing we want for a barricade. Could you drive it?"

"Ah, is it to have the union after me?" says I.

"Ah, to hell with the union," says a second fellow. "If you'll drive it we'll rig it up as an armoured train."

Now, I did not like the tone them fellows took. They were making too free altogether, and it struck me as peculiar that there wouldn't be a bobby there to send them about their business. I went on a couple of hundred

yards, and what did I see only a second party These fellows were wearing khaki, and I recognized them as cadets from the college They were standing on the steps of the big hotel overlooking the tram, and the young fellow that was supposed to be their officer was very excited

"That tram is in the direct line of fire," he says "It's not a safe place"

"Ah, well," I said, 'in my job there's a lot of things aren't safe I hope if anything happens me you'll put in a good word for me with the tramway company"

Mind you, I was still not taking them seriously I didn't know what I was after walking into And the first thing I did was to go over the tram to see was there anything missing The world is full of light-fingered people, and a thing like that, if you only left it for five minutes, you wouldn't know what would be gone I was shocked when I seen the upstairs The glass was all broken and the upholstery ripped

Then the shooting began, and I had to lie on the floor, but after a while it eased off, and I sat up and ate my lunch and read the daily paper There was no one around, because whenever anyone showed himself at the end of the road, there was a bang and he ran for his life Coming on to dusk, I began to worry a bit about whether I was going to be relieved at all that day I knew Danny Delea, the foreman, was a conscientious sort of man, and if he couldn't get a relief, he'd send me word what to do, but no one came, and I was beginning to get a bit hungry I don't mind admitting that a couple of times I got up to go home I didn't like sitting there with the darkness coming on, not knowing was I going to be relieved that night or the next week But each time I sat down again That is the sort I am I knew the light-fingered gentiy, and I knew that, firing or no firing, they were on the lookout and I wouldn't be out of that tram before one of them would be along to see what could he pick up I would not give it to say to the rest of the men that I would leave a valuable thing like a tram

Then, all at once, the firing got hot again, and when I looked out, what did I see in the dusk only a girl coming from behind the railings in the park and running this way and that in an aimless sort of way She looked as if she was out of her mind with fright, and I could see the fright was more a danger to her than anything else Mind, I had no wish for her company! I saw what she was, and they are a sort of woman I would never have much to do with They are always trying to make friends with watchmen, because we are out at all hours At the same time, I saw if I didn't do something quick, she'd be killed under my eyes, so I stood on the platform and shouted to her to come in She was a woman I didn't know by sight, a woman of about thirty-five Cummins her name was The family was from Waterford She was a good-looking piece too, considering I made her lie on the floor to get out of the shooting, but she was nearly hysterical, lifting her head to look at me and lowering it not to see what was going on

"But who in hell is it, mister?" she says 'God Almighty, I only came out for a bit of sugar for me tea and look at the capers I'm after walking into! Sacred Heart of Jesus, they're off again You'd think

I was something at a fair, the way they were banging them bloody bullets all around me Who is it at all?"

"It's the cadets in the hotel here, shooting at the other fellows beyond the park," I said

"But why don't someone send for the police? Damn soon them fellows would be along if it was only me talking to a fellow!"

"'Twould take a lot of police to stop this," says I

"But what are they shooting for, mister?" says she "Is it for Ireland?"

"Ireland?" says I 'A fat lot Ireland have to hope for from little whipper-snappers like them "

"Still and all," says she, "if 'twas for Ireland, you wouldn't mind so much "

And I declare to God but she had a tear in her eye That is the kind of women they are They'll steal the false teeth from a corpse, but let them lay eyes on a green flag or a child in his First Communion suit, and you'd think patriotism and religion were the only two things ever in their minds

"That sort of blackguarding isn't going to do any good to Ireland or anyone else," says I "What I want to know is who is going to pay for the damage? Not them They never did an honest day's work in their lives, most of them We're going to pay for it, the way we always do "

"I'd pay them every bloody penny I have in the world this minute if only they'd shut up and go away," she says "For God's sake, will you listen to them!"

Things were getting hotter again What was after happening was that some of the Volunteer fellows were after crossing the park behind the shrubbery and were firing up at the hotel They might as well be firing at the moon The cadets were after knocking out every pane of glass and barricading the windows One of the Volunteers jumped from a branch of a tree over the railings and ran across the road to the tram He was an insignificant little article with a saucy air You could tell by his accent he wasn't from Dublin I took him to be from somewhere in the North I didn't like him much I never did like them Northerners anyway

"What are ye doing here?" he says in surprise when he seen us lying on the floor

"I'm the watchman," says I, cutting him short

"Begor, a watchman ought to be able to watch himself better than that," he says, and without as much as "By your leave" he up with the rifle butt and knocked out every pane of glass in the side of the tram It went to my heart to see it go Any other time I'd have taken him and wrung his neck, but, you see, I was lying on the floor and couldn't get up to him with the firing I pretended not to mind, but I looked at the glass and then I looked at him

"And who," I said, "is going to pay for that?"

"Och, Mick MacQuaid to be sure," says he

"Ah, the gentleman is right," says the woman "Only for him we might all be kilt "

The way she about-faced and started to soft-solder that fellow got on



my nerves It is always the same with that sort of woman They are people you can't trust

"And what the hell is it to anyone whether you're killed or not?" I said "No one asked you to stop This is the tramway company's property, and if you don't like it you can leave it You have no claim "

"We'll see whose property this is when it's all over," says the man, and he began shooting up at the windows of the hotel

"Hey, mister," says the woman, "is that the English you're shooting at?"

"Who else do you think 'twould be?" says he

"Ah, I was only saying when you came in that I'd never mind if 'twas against the English I suppose 'twill be in the history books, mister, like Robert Emmet?"

"Robert Emmet!" I said "I'd like to know where you and the likes of you would be only for the English "

"Well, do you know," she says, as innocent as you please, "'tis a funny thing about me, but I never cared much for the English soldiers Of course, mind you, you'd meet nice fellows everywhere, but you'd never know where you were with the English They haven't the same nature as our own somehow "

Then someone blew a whistle in the park, and your man dropped his rifle and looked out to see how he was going to get back

"You're going to get your nose shot off if you go out in that, mister," says the woman "If you'll take my advice, you'll wait till 'tis dark "

"I'm after getting into a tight corner all right," says he

"Oh, you'll never cross the street alive, mister," she says as if she was delighted with it "The best thing you could do now would be to wait till after dark and come round to my little place for a cup of tea You'd be safe there anyway "

"Och, to hell with it," says he "I have only to take a chance," and he crept down the steps and made for the railings They spotted him, because they all began to blaze together The woman got on her hands and knees to look after him

"Aha, he's away!" says she, clapping her hands like a child "Good man you are, me bold fellow I wouldn't wish for a pound that anything would happen that young man," says she to me

"The shooting on both sides is remarkably wide," says I "That fellow should have more sense "

"Ah, we won't know till we're dead who have the sense and who haven't," says she "Some people might get a proper suck-in God, wouldn't I laugh "

"Some people are going to get a suck-in long before that," says I "The impudence of that fellow, talking about the tramway company He thinks they're going to hand it over to him Whoever is in, he's not going to see much of it "

"Ah, what matter?" she said "'Tis only youth Youth is lovely, I always think And 'tis awful to think of young fellows being kilt, whoever

they are Like in France God, 'twould go to your heart And what is it all for? Ireland! Holy Moses, what did Ireland ever do for us? Bread and dripping and a kick in the ass is all we ever got out of it You're right about the English, though You'd meet some very genuine English chaps Very sincere, in their own way "

"Oh, they have their good points," says I "I never saw much to criticize in them, only they're given too much liberty "

"Ah, what harm did a bit of liberty ever do anyone, though?" says she

"Now, it does do harm," says I "Too much liberty is bad People ought to mind themselves Look at me! I'm on this job the best part of my life, and I have more opportunities than most, but thanks to God, I can say I never took twopenceworth belonging to my employers nor never had anything to do with a woman outside my own door "

"And a hell of a lot of thanks you'll get for it in the heel of the hunt," says she "Five bob a week pension and the old woman stealing it out of your pocket while you're asleep Don't I know all about it? Oh, God, I wish I was back in me own little room I'd give all the countries that ever was this minute for a cup of tea with sugar in it I'd never mind the rations only for the bit of sugar Hi, mister, would you ever see me home to the doss? I wouldn't be afraid if I had you with me "

"But I have to mind this tram," says I

"You have what?" says she, cocking her head "Who do you think is going to run away with it?"

"Now, you'd be surprised," says I

"Surprised?" says she "I'd be enchanted "

"Well," I said, "the way I look at it, I'm paid to look after it, and this is my place till I'm relieved "

"But how the hell could you be relieved with this merry-go-round?"

"This is a matter for my employers to decide," says I

"God," says she, "I may be bad but you're looney," and then she looked at me and she giggled She started giggling, and she went on giggling, just as if she couldn't stop That is what I say about them women There is a sort of childishness in them all, just as if they couldn't be serious about anything That is what has them the way they are

So the night came on, and the stars came out, and the shooting only got louder We were sitting there in the tram, saying nothing, when all at once I looked out and saw the red light over the houses

"That's a fire," says I

"If it is, 'tis a mighty big fire," says she

And then we saw another one to the left of it, and another and another till the whole sky seemed to be lit up, and the smoke pouring away out to sea as if it was the whole sky was moving

"That's the whole city on fire," says I

"And 'tis getting mighty close to us," says she "God send they don't burn this place as well 'Tis bad enough to be starved and frozen without being roasted alive as well "

I was too mesmerized to speak I knew what 'twas worth Millions of

pounds' worth of property burning, and no one to pour a drop of water on it That is what revolutions are like People talk about poverty, and then it all goes up in smoke—enough to keep thousands comfortable

Then, all at once, the shooting got nearer, and when I looked out I saw a man coming up the road The first impression I got of him was that he was badly wounded, for he was staggering from one side of the road to the other with his hands in the air "I surrender, I surrender," he was shouting, and the more he shouted, the harder they fired He staggered out into the middle of the road again, stood there for a minute, and then went down like a sack of meal

"Oh, the poor misfortunate man!" says the woman, putting her hands to her face "Did you ever see such barbarity? Killing him like that in cold blood!"

But he wasn't killed yet, for he began to bawl all over again, and when he got tired of holding up his hands, he stuck his feet in the air instead

"Cruel, bloody, barbarous brutes!" says the woman "They ought to be ashamed of themselves He told them he surrendered, and they won't let him" And without another word, away with her off down the street to him, bawling "Here, mister, come on in here and you'll be safe"

A wonder we weren't all killed with her He got up and started running towards the tram with his hands still in the air When she grabbed him and pushed him up on the platform, he still had them there I seen then by his appearance that he wasn't wounded but drunk He was a thin-looking scrawny man with a cloth cap

"I surrender," he bawls "*Kamerad*"

"Hi, mister," says the woman, "would you for the love of the suffering God stop surrendering and lie down"

'But they won't let me lie down,' says he "That's all I want is to lie down, but every time I do they make a cockshot of me What in hell is it?"

"Oh, this is the Rising, mister," she says

"The what?" says he

"The Rising," says she "Like they said in the papers there would be"

"Who's rising?" says he, grabbing his head "What paper said that? I want to know is this the D T 's I have or isn't it?"

"Oh, 'tisn't the D T 's at all, mister," she says, delighted to be able to spread the good news "This is all real, what you see 'Tis the Irish rising Our own boys, don't you know? Like in Robert Emmet's Time The Irish are on that side and the English are on this 'Twas the English was firing at you, the low scuts!"

"Bugger them!" he says "They're after giving me a splitting head There's no justice in this bloody world" Then he sat on the inside step of the tram and put his head between his knees "Like an engine," he says "Have you e'er a drop of water?"

"Ah, where would we get it, man?" says the woman, brightening up when she seen him take the half pint of whisky out of his hip pocket 'Tis a mystery to me still it wasn't broken "Is that whisky you have, mister?"

"No water?" says he, and then he began to shudder all over and put his hand over his face "Where am I?" says he

"Where should you be?" says she

"How the hell do I know and the trams not running?" says he "Tell me, am I alive or dead?"

"Well, you're alive for the time being," says the woman "How long we're all going to be that way is another matter entirely "

"Well, are you alive, ma'am?" says he "You'll excuse me being personal?"

"Oh, no offence, mister," says she "I'm still in the queue "

"And do you see what I see?" says he

"What's that, mister?"

"All them fires "

"Oh," says she, "don't let a little thing like that worry you, mister That's not hell, if that's what you're afraid of That's only the city burning "

"The what burning?" says he

"The city burning," says she "That's it, there "

"There's more than the bloody city burning," says he "Haven't you e'er a drop of water at all?"

"Ah, we can spare it," she says "I think it must be the Almighty God sent you, mister I declare to you, with all the goings-on, I hadn't a mouthful to eat the whole day, not as much as a cup of tea "

So she took a swig of the bottle and passed it to me It is stuff I would never much care for, the whisky, but having nothing to eat, I was feeling in the want of something

"Who's that fellow in there?" says he, noticing me for the first time

"That's only the watchman," says she

"Is he Irish or English?" says the drunk

"Ah, what the hell would he be only Irish?"

"Because if he's English, he's getting none of my whisky," says the drunk, beginning to throw his arms about 'I'd cut the throat of any bloody Englishman "

Oh, pure, unadulterated patriotism! Leave it to a boozier

"Now, don't be attracting attention, like a good man," she says "We all have our principles but we don't want to be overheard We're in trouble enough, God knows "

"I'm not afraid of anyone," says he, staggering to his feet "I'm not afraid to tell the truth A bloody Englishman that would shoot a misfortunate man and he on the ground, I despise him I despise the English "

Then there was a couple of bangs, and he threw up his hands and down with him like a scarecrow in a high wind

"I declare to me God," says the woman with an ugly glance at the hotel, "them fellows in there are wound up Are you hit, mister?" says she, giving him a shake "Oh, begod, I'm afraid his number's up "

"Open his collar and give us a look at him," says I By this time I was sick of the pair of them

"God help us, and not a priest nor doctor to be had," says she "Could you say the prayers for the dying?"

"How would I know the prayers for the dying?" says I

"Say an act of contrition so," says she

Well, I began, but I was so upset that I started the Creed instead

"That's not the act of contrition," says she

"Say it yourself as you're so smart," says I, and she began, but before she was finished, the drunk shook his fist in the air and said "I'll cut the living lights out of any Englishman," and then he began to snore

"Some people have the gift," says she

Gift was no word for it We sat there the whole night, shivering and not able to get more than a snooze, and that fellow never stirred, only for the roar of the snoring He never woke at all until it was coming on to dawn, and then he put his head in his hands again and began complaining of the headache

"Bad whisky is the ruination of the world," says he

"Everyone's trouble is their own," says the woman

And at that moment a lot of cadets came out of the hotel and over to the tram

"Will you look at them?" says the woman "Didn't I tell you they were wound up?"

"You'll have to get out of this now," says the officer, swinging his gun

"And where are we going to go?" says she

"The city is all yours," says he

"And so is the Bank of Ireland," says she "If I was only in my own little room this minute, you could have the rest of the city—with my compliments Where are you off to?" she asked the drunk

"I'll have to get the Phibsboro tram," says he

"You could order two while you're about it," she says "The best thing the pair of ye can do is come along to my little place and wait till this jigmareel is over"

"I have to stop here," says I

"You can't," says the officer

"But I must stop till I'm relieved, man," says I, getting angry with him

"You're relieved," he says "I'm relieving you"

And, of course, I had to do what he said All the same, before I went, I gave him a piece of my mind

"There's no need for this sort of thing at all," I says "There's nothing to be gained by destroying valuable property If people would only do what they were told and mind their own business, there would be no need for any of this blackguarding"

The woman wanted me to come into her room for a cup of tea, but I wouldn't I was too disgusted Away with me across the bridge, and the fellows that were guarding it never halted me or anything, and I never stopped till I got home to my own place Then I went to bed, and I didn't get up for a week, till the whole thing was over They had prisoners going in by droves, and I never as much as looked out at them I was never so disgusted with anything in my life

Isabel Pervin was listening for two sounds—for the sound of wheels on the drive outside and for the noise of her husband's footsteps in the hall. Her dearest and oldest friend, a man who seemed almost indispensable to her living, would drive up in the rainy dusk of the closing November day. The trap had gone to fetch him from the station. And her husband, who had been blinded in Flanders, and who had a disfiguring mark on his brow, would be coming in from the outhouses.

He had been home for a year now. He was totally blind. Yet they had been very happy. The Grange was Maurice's own place. The back was a farmstead, and the Wernhams, who occupied the rear premises, acted as farmers. Isabel lived with her husband in the handsome rooms in front. She and he had been almost entirely alone together since he was wounded. They talked and sang and read together in a wonderful and unspeakable intimacy. Then she reviewed books for a Scottish newspaper, carrying on her old interest, and he occupied himself a good deal with the farm. Sightless, he could still discuss everything with Wernham, and he could also do a good deal of work about the place—menial work, it is true, but it gave him satisfaction. He milked the cows, carried in the pails, turned the separator, attended to the pigs and horses. Life was still very full and strangely serene for the blind man, peaceful with the almost incomprehensible peace of immediate contact in darkness. With his wife he had a whole world, rich and real and invisible.

They were newly and remotely happy. He did not even regret the loss of his sight in these times of dark, palpable joy. A certain exultance swelled his soul.

But as time wore on, sometimes the rich glamour would leave them. Sometimes, after months of this intensity, a sense of burden overcame Isabel, a weariness, a terrible ennui, in that silent house approached between a colonnade of tall-shafted pines. Then she felt she would go mad, for she could not bear it. And sometimes he had devastating fits of depression, which seemed to lay waste his whole being. It was worse than depression—a black misery, when his own life was a torture to him, and when his presence was unbearable to his wife. The dread went down to the roots of her soul as these black days recurred. In a kind of panic she tried to wrap herself up still further in her husband. She forced the old spontaneous cheerfulness and joy to continue. But the effort it cost her was almost too much.

She knew she could not keep it up. She felt she would scream with the strain, and would give anything, anything, to escape. She longed to possess her husband utterly, it gave her inordinate joy to have him entirely to herself. And yet, when again he was gone in a black and massive misery, she could not bear him, she could not bear herself, she wished she could be snatched away off the earth altogether, anything rather than live at this cost.

Dazed, she schemed for a way out. She invited friends, she tried to give him some further connection with the outer world. But it was no good. After all their joy and suffering, after their dark, great year of blindness and solitude and unspeakable nearness, other people seemed to them both shallow, rattling, rather impertinent. Shallow prattle seemed presumptuous. He became impatient and irritated, she was wearied. And so they lapsed into their solitude again. For they preferred it.

But now, in a few weeks' time, her second baby would be born. The first had died, an infant, when her husband first went out to France. She looked with joy and relief to the coming of the second. It would be her salvation. But also she felt some anxiety. She was thirty years old, her husband was a year younger. They both wanted the child very much. Yet she could not help feeling afraid. She had her husband on her hands, a terrible joy to her, and a terrifying burden. The child would occupy her love and attention. And then, what of Maurice? What would he do? If only she could feel that he, too, would be at peace and happy when the child came! She did so want to luxuriate in a rich, physical satisfaction of maternity. But the man, what would he do? How could she provide for him, how avert those shattering black moods of his, which destroyed them both?

She sighed with fear. But at this time Bertie Reid wrote to Isabel. He was her old friend, a second or third cousin, a Scotchman, as she was a Scotchwoman. They had been brought up near to one another, and all her life he had been her friend, like a brother, but better than her own brothers. She loved him—though not in the marrying sense. There was a sort of kinship between them, an affinity. They understood one another instinctively. But Isabel would never have thought of marrying Bertie. It would have seemed like marrying in her own family.

Bertie was a barrister and a man of letters, a Scotchman of the intellectual type, quick, ironical, sentimental, and on his knees before the woman he adored but did not want to marry. Maurice Pervin was different. He came of a good old country family—the Grange was not a very great distance from Oxford. He was passionate, sensitive, perhaps over-sensitive, wincing—a big fellow with heavy limbs and a forehead that flushed painfully. For his mind was slow, as if drugged by the strong provincial blood that beat in his veins. He was very sensitive to his own mental slowness, his feelings being quick and acute. So that he was just the opposite to Bertie, whose mind was much quicker than his emotions, which were not so very fine.

From the first the two men did not like each other Isabel felt that they ought to get on together But they did not She felt that if only each could have the clue to the other there would be such a rare understanding between them It did not come off, however Bertie adopted a slightly ironical attitude, very offensive to Maurice, who returned the Scotch irony with English resentment, a resentment which deepened sometimes into stupid hatred

This was a little puzzling to Isabel However, she accepted it in the course of things Men were made freakish and unreasonable Therefore, when Maurice was going out to France for the second time, she felt that, for her husband's sake, she must discontinue her friendship with Bertie She wrote to the barrister to this effect Bertram Reid simply replied that in this, as in all other matters, he must obey her wishes, if these were indeed her wishes

For nearly two years nothing had passed between the two friends Isabel rather gloried in the fact, she had no compunction She had one great article of faith, which was, that husband and wife should be so important to one another, that the rest of the world simply did not count She and Maurice were husband and wife They loved one another They would have children Then let everybody and everything else fade into insignificance outside this connubial felicity She professed herself quite happy and ready to receive Maurice's friends She was happy and ready the happy wife, the ready woman in possession Without knowing why, the friends retired abashed, and came no more Maurice, of course, took as much satisfaction in this connubial absorption as Isabel did

He shared in Isabel's literary activities, she cultivated a real interest in agriculture and cattle-raising For she, being at heart perhaps an emotional enthusiast, always cultivated the practical side of life and prided herself on her mastery of practical affairs Thus the husband and wife had spent the five years of their married life The last had been one of blindness and unspeakable intimacy And now Isabel felt a great indifference coming over her, a sort of lethargy She wanted to be allowed to bear her child in peace, to nod by the fire and drift vaguely, physically, from day to day Maurice was like an ominous thunder-cloud She had to keep waking up to remember him

When a little note came from Bertie, asking if he were to put up a tombstone to their dead friendship, and speaking of the real pain he felt on account of her husband's loss of sight, she felt a pang, a fluttering agitation of reawakening And she read the letter to Maurice

"Ask him to come down," he said

"Ask Bertie to come here!" she re-echoed

"Yes—if he wants to "

Isabel paused for a few moments

"I know he wants to—he'd only be too glad," she replied "But what about you, Maurice? How should you like it?"

"I should like it "



"Well—in that case— But I thought you didn't care for him—"

"Oh, I don't know I might think differently of him now," the blind man replied. It was rather abstruse to Isabel.

"Well, dear," she said, "if you're quite sure—"

"I'm sure enough. Let him come," said Maurice.

So Bertie was coming, coming this evening, in the November rain and darkness. Isabel was agitated, racked with her old restlessness and indecision. She had always suffered from this pain of doubt, just an agonizing sense of uncertainty. It had begun to pass off, in the lethargy of maternity. Now it returned, and she resented it. She struggled as usual to maintain her calm, composed, friendly bearing, a sort of mask she wore over all her body.

A woman had lighted a tall lamp beside the table and spread the cloth. The long dining-room was dim, with its elegant but rather severe pieces of old furniture. Only the round table glowed softly under the light. It had a rich, beautiful effect. The white cloth glistened and dropped its heavy, pointed lace corners almost to the carpet, the china was old and handsome, creamy-yellow, with a blotched pattern of harsh red and deep blue, the cups large and bell-shaped, the teapot gallant. Isabel looked at it with superficial appreciation.

Her nerves were hurting her. She looked automatically again at the high, uncurtained windows. In the last dusk she could just perceive outside a huge fir-tree swaying its boughs. It was as if she thought it rather than saw it. The rain came flying on the window panes. Ah, why had she no peace? These two men, why did they tear at her? Why did they not come—why was there this suspense?

She sat in a lassitude that was really suspense and irritation. Maurice, at least, might come in—there was nothing to keep him out. She rose to her feet. Catching sight of her reflection in a mirror, she glanced at herself with a slight smile of recognition, as if she were an old friend to herself. Her face was oval and calm, her nose a little arched. Her neck made a beautiful line down to her shoulder. With hair knotted loosely behind, she had something of a warm, maternal look. Thinking this of herself, she arched her eyebrows and her rather heavy eyelids, with a little flicker of a smile, and for a moment her grey eyes looked amused and wicked, a little sardonic, out of her transfigured Madonna face.

Then, resuming her air of womanly patience—she was really fatally self-determined—she went with a little jerk towards the door. Her eyes were slightly reddened.

She passed down the wide hall and through a door at the end. Then she was in the farm premises. The scent of dairy, and of farm-kitchen, and of farm-yard and of leather almost overcame her, but particularly the scent of dairy. They had been scalding out the pans. The flagged passage in front of her was dark, puddled, and wet. Light came out from the open kitchen door. She went forward and stood in the doorway. The farm-people were at tea, seated at a little distance from her, round a long, narrow table, in the centre of which stood a white lamp. Ruddy faces, ruddy hands hold-

ing food, red mouths working, heads bent over the tea-cups men, land-girls, boys it was tea-time, feeding-time Some faces caught sight of her Mrs Wernham, going round behind the chairs with a large black teapot, halting slightly in her walk, was not aware of her for a moment Then she turned suddenly

"Oh, is it Madam!" she exclaimed "Come in, then, come in! We're at tea" And she dragged forward a chair

"No, I won't come in," said Isabel "I'm afraid I interrupt your meal"

"No—no—not likely, Madame, not likely"

"Hasn't Mr Pervin come in, do you know?"

"I'm sure I couldn't say! Missed him, have you, Madam?"

"No, I only wanted him to come in," laughed Isabel, as if shyly

"Wanted him, did ye? Get up, boy—get up, now—"

Mrs Wernham knocked one of the boys on the shoulder He began to scrape to his feet, chewing largely

"I believe he's in top stable," said another face from the table

"Ah! No, don't get up I'm going myself," said Isabel

"Don't you go out on a dirty night like this Let the lad go Get along wi' ye, boy," said Mrs Wernham

"No, no," said Isabel, with a decision that was always obeyed "Go on with your tea, Tom I'd like to go across to the stable, Mrs Wernham"

"Did ever you hear tell!" exclaimed the woman

"Isn't the trap late?" asked Isabel

"Why, no," said Mrs Wernham, peering into the distance at the tall, dim clock "No, Madam—we can give it another quarter or twenty minutes yet, good—yes, every bit of a quarter"

"Ah! It seems late when darkness falls so early," said Isabel

"It do, that it do Bother the days, that they draw in so," answered Mrs Wernham "Proper miserable!"

"They are," said Isabel, withdrawing

She pulled on her overshoes, wrapped a large tartan shawl around her, put on a man's felt hat, and ventured out along the causeways of the first yard It was very dark The wind was roaring in the great elms behind the outhouses When she came to the second yard the darkness seemed deeper She was unsure of her footing She wished she had brought a lantern Rain blew against her Half she liked it, half she felt unwilling to battle

She reached at last the just visible door of the stable There was no sign of a light anywhere Opening the upper half, she looked in into a simple well of darkness The smell of horses and ammonia, and of warmth was startling to her, in that full night She listened with all her ears but could hear nothing save the night, and the stirring of a horse

"Maurice!" she called, softly and musically, though she was afraid "Maurice—are you there?"

Nothing came from the darkness She knew the rain and wind blew in upon the horses, the hot animal life Feeling it wrong, she entered the stable and drew the lower half of the door shut, holding the upper part close She did not stir, because she was aware of the presence of the dark

hind-quarters of the horses, though she could not see them, and she was afraid. Something wild stirred in her heart.

She listened intensely. Then she heard a small noise in the distance—far away, it seemed—the clink of a pan, and a man's voice speaking a brief word. It would be Maurice, in the other part of the stable. She stood motionless, waiting for him to come through the partition door. The horses were so terrifyingly near to her, in the invisible.

The loud jarring of the inner door-latch made her start, the door was opened. She could hear and feel her husband entering and invisibly passing among the horses near to her, darkness as they were actively intermingled. The rather low sound of his voice as he spoke to the horses came velvety to her nerves. How near he was, and how invisible! The darkness seemed to be in a strange swirl of violent life, just upon her. She turned giddy.

Her presence of mind made her call quietly and musically

"Maurice! Maurice—dear-ar!"

"Yes," he answered. "Isabel?"

She saw nothing, and the sound of his voice seemed to touch her.

"Hello!" she answered cheerfully, straining her eyes to see him. He was still busy, attending to the horses near her, but she saw only darkness. It made her almost desperate.

"Won't you come in, dear?" she said.

"Yes, I'm coming. Just half a minute. Stand over—now! Trap's not come, has it?"

"Not yet," said Isabel.

His voice was pleasant and ordinary, but it had a slight suggestion of the stable to her. She wished he would come away. Whilst he was so utterly invisible, she was afraid of him.

"How's the time?" he asked.

"Not yet six," she replied. She disliked to answer into the dark. Presently he came very near to her, and she retreated out of doors.

"The weather blows in here," he said, coming steadily forward, feeling for the doors. She shrank away. At last she could dimly see him.

"Bertie won't have much of a drive," he said, as he closed the doors.

"He won't indeed!" said Isabel calmly, watching the dark shape at the door.

"Give me your arm, dear," she said.

She pressed his arm close to her, as she went. But she longed to see him, to look at him. She was nervous. He walked erect, with face rather lifted, but with a curious tentative movement of his powerful, muscular legs. She could feel the clever, careful, strong contact of his feet with the earth, as she balanced against him. For a moment he was a tower of darkness to her, as if he rose out of the earth.

In the house-passage he wavered and went cautiously, with a curious look of silence about him as he felt for the bench. Then he sat down heavily. He was a man with rather sloping shoulders, but with heavy limbs, powerful legs that seemed to know the earth. His head was small, usually

carried high and light As he bent down to unfasten his gaiters and boots he did not look blind His hair was brown and crisp, his hands were large, reddish, intelligent, the veins stood out in the wrists, and his thighs and knees seemed massive When he stood up his face and neck were surcharged with blood, the veins stood out on his temples She did not look at his blindness

Isabel was always glad when they had passed through the dividing door into their own regions of repose and beauty She was a little afraid of him, out there in the animal grossness of the back His bearings also changed, as he smelt the familiar indefinable odour that pervaded his wife's surroundings, a delicate, refined scent, very faintly spicy Perhaps it came from the potpourri bowls

He stood at the foot of the stairs, arrested, listening She watched him, and her heart sickened He seemed to be listening to fate

"He's not here yet," he said "I'll go up and change "

"Maurice," she said, "you're not wishing he wouldn't come, are you?"

"I couldn't quite say," he answered "I feel myself rather on the quiver "

"I can see you are," she answered And she reached up and kissed his cheek She saw his mouth relax into a slow smile

"What are you laughing at?" she said roguishly

"You consoling me," he answered

"Nay," she answered "Why should I console you? You know we love each other—you know how married we are! What does anything else matter?"

"Nothing at all, my dear "

He felt for her face and touched it, smiling

"You're all right, aren't you?" he asked anxiously

"I'm wonderfullv all right, love," she answered "It's you I am a little troubled about, at times "

"Why me?" he said, touching her cheeks delicately with the tips of his fingers The touch had an almost hypnotizing effect on her

He went away upstairs She saw him mount into the darkness, unseeing and unchanging He did not know that the lamps on the upper corridor were unlighted He went on into the darkness with unchanging step She heard him in the bath-room

Pervin moved about almost unconsciously in his familiar surroundings, dark though everything was He seemed to know the presence of objects before he touched them It was a pleasure to him to rock thus through a world of things, carried on the flood in a sort of blood-prescience He did not think much or trouble much So long as he kept this sheer immediacy of blood-contact with the substantial world he was happy, he wanted no intervention of visual consciousness In this state there was a certain rich positivity, bordering sometimes on rapture Life seemed to move in him like a tide lapping, lapping, and advancing, enveloping all things darkly It was a pleasure to stretch forth the hand and meet the unseen object, clasp it, and possess it in pure contact He did not try to remember, to

visualize He did not want to The new way of consciousness substituted itself in him

The rich suffusion of this state generally kept him happy, reaching its culmination in the consuming passion for his wife But at times the flow would seem to be checked and thrown back Then it would beat inside him like a tangled sea, and he was tortured in the shattered chaos of his own blood He grew to dread this arrest, this throw-back, this chaos inside himself, when he seemed merely at the mercy of his own powerful and conflicting elements How to get some measure of control or surety, this was the question And when the question rose maddening in him, he would clench his fists as if he would compel the whole universe to submit to him But it was in vain He could not even compel himself

Tonight, however, he was still serene, though little tremors of unreasonable exasperation ran through him He had to handle the razor very carefully, as he shaved, for it was not at one with him, he was afraid of it His hearing also was too much sharpened He heard the woman lighting the lamps on the corridor, and attending to the fire in the visitors' room And then, as he went to his room, he heard the trap arrive Then came Isabel's voice, lifted and calling, like a bell ringing

"Is it you, Bertie? Have you come?"

And a man's voice answered out of the wind

"Hello, Isabel! There you are "

"Have you had a miserable drive? I'm so sorry we couldn't send a closed carriage I can't see you at all, you know "

"I'm coming No, I liked the drive—it was like Perthshire Well, how are you? You're looking fit as ever, as far as I can see "

"Oh, yes," said Isabel "I'm wonderfully well How are you? Rather thin, I think—"

"Worked to death—everybody's old cry But I'm all right, Ciss How's Pervin?—isn't he here?"

"Oh, yes, he's upstairs changing Yes, he's awfully well Take off your wet things, I'll send them to be dried "

"And how are you both, in spirits? He doesn't fret?"

"No—no, not at all No, on the contrary, really We've been wonderfully happy, incredibly It's more than I can understand—so wonderful the nearness, and the peace—"

"Ah! Well, that's awfully good news—"

They moved away Pervin heard no more But a childish sense of desolation had come over him, as he heard their brisk voices He seemed shut out—like a child that is left out He was aimless and excluded, he did not know what to do with himself The helpless desolation came over him He fumbled nervously as he dressed himself, in a state almost of childishness He disliked the Scotch accent in Bertie's speech, and the slight response it found on Isabel's tongue He disliked the slight purr of complacency in the Scottish speech He disliked intensely the glib way in which Isabel spoke of their happiness and nearness It made him recoil He was

fretful and beside himself like a child, he had almost a childish nostalgia to be included in the life circle. And at the same time he was a man, dark and powerful and infuriated by his own weakness. By some fatal flaw, he could not be by himself, he had to depend on the support of another. And this very dependence enraged him. He hated Bertie Reid, and at the same time he knew the hatred was nonsense, he knew it was the outcome of his own weakness.

He went downstairs. Isabel was alone in the dining-room. She watched him enter, head erect, his feet tentative. He looked so strong-blooded and healthy and, at the same time, cancelled. Cancelled—that was the word that flew across her mind. Perhaps it was his scar suggested it.

‘You heard Bertie come, Maurice?’ she said.

‘Yes—isn’t he here?’

‘He’s in his room. He looks very thin and worn.’

‘I suppose he works himself to death.’

A woman came in with a tray—and after a few minutes Bertie came down. He was a little dark man, with a very big forehead, thin, wispy hair, and sad, large eyes. His expression was inordinately sad—almost funny. He had odd, short legs.

Isabel watched him hesitate under the door, and glance nervously at her husband. Pervin heard him and turned.

‘Here you are, now,’ said Isabel. ‘Come, let us eat.’

Bertie went across to Maurice.

‘How are you, Pervin?’ he said, as he advanced.

The blind man stuck his hand out into space, and Bertie took it.

‘Very fit. Glad you’ve come,’ said Maurice.

Isabel glanced at them, and glanced away, as if she could not bear to see them.

‘Come,’ she said. ‘Come to table. Aren’t you both awfully hungry? I am, tremendously.’

‘I’m afraid you waited for me,’ said Bertie, as they sat down.

Maurice had a curious monolithic way of sitting in a chair, erect and distant. Isabel’s heart always beat when she caught sight of him thus.

‘No,’ she replied to Bertie. ‘We’re very little later than usual. We’re having a sort of high tea, not dinner. Do you mind? It gives us such a nice long evening, uninterrupted.’

‘I like it,’ said Bertie.

Maurice was feeling, with curious little movements, almost like a cat kneading her bed, for his plate, his knife and fork, his napkin. He was getting the whole geography of his cover into his consciousness. He sat erect and inscrutable, remote-seeming. Bertie watched the static figure of the blind man, the delicate tactile discernment of the large, ruddy hands, and the curious mindless silence of the brow, above the scar. With difficulty he looked away, and without knowing what he did, picked up a little crystal bowl of violets from the table, and held them to his nose.

‘They are sweet-scented,’ he said. ‘Where do they come from?’

"From the garden—under the windows," said Isabel

"So late in the year—and so fragrant! Do you remember the violets under Aunt Bell's south wall?"

The two friends looked at each other and exchanged a smile, Isabel's eyes lighting up

"Don't I?" she replied "Wasn't she queer!"

"A curious old girl," laughed Bertie "There's a streak of freakishness in the family, Isabel"

"Ah—but not in you and me, Bertie," said Isabel "Give them to Maurice, will you?" she added, as Bertie was putting down the flowers "Have you smelled the violets, dear? Do!—they are so scented"

Maurice held out his hand, and Bertie placed the tiny bowl against his large, warm-looking fingers Maurice's hand closed over the thin white fingers of the barrister Bertie carefully extricated himself Then the two watched the blind man smelling the violets He bent his head and seemed to be thinking Isabel waited

"Aren't they sweet, Maurice?" she said at last, anxiously

"Very," he said And he held out the bowl Bertie took it Both he and Isabel were a little afraid, and deeply disturbed

The meal continued Isabel and Bertie chatted spasmodically The blind man was silent He touched his food repeatedly, with quick, delicate touches of his knife-point, then cut irregular bits He could not bear to be helped Both Isabel and Bertie suffered Isabel wondered why She did not suffer when she was alone with Maurice Bertie made her conscious of a strangeness

After the meal the three drew their chairs to the fire, and sat down to talk The decanters were put on a table near at hand Isabel knocked the logs on the fire, and clouds of brilliant sparks went up the chimney Bertie noticed a slight weariness in her bearing

"You will be glad when your child comes now, Isabel?" he said

She looked up to him with a quick wan smile

"Yes, I shall be glad," she answered "It begins to seem long Yes, I shall be very glad So will you, Maurice, won't you?" she added

"Yes, I shall," replied her husband

"We are both looking forward so much to having it," she said

"Yes, of course," said Bertie

He was a bachelor, three or four years older than Isabel He lived in beautiful rooms overlooking the river, guarded by a faithful Scottish manservant And he had his friends among the fair sex—not lovers, friends So long as he could avoid any danger of courtship or marriage, he adored a few good women with constant and unfailing homage, and he was chivalrously fond of quite a number But if they seemed to encroach on him, he withdrew and detested them

Isabel knew him very well, knew his beautiful constancy, and kindness, also his incurable weakness, which made him unable ever to enter into close contact of any sort He was ashamed of himself because he could not

marry, could not approach women physically. He wanted to do so. But he could not. At the centre of him he was afraid, helplessly and even brutally afraid. He had given up hope, had ceased to expect any more that he could escape his own weakness. Hence he was a brilliant and successful barrister, also a litterateur of high repute, a rich man, and a great social success. At the centre he felt himself neuter, nothing.

Isabel knew him well. She despised him even while she admired him. She looked at his sad face, his little short legs, and felt contempt of him. She looked at his dark grey eyes, with their uncanny, almost childlike, intuition, and she loved him. He understood amazingly—but she had no fear of his understanding. As a man she patronized him.

And she turned to the impassive, silent figure of her husband. He sat leaning back, with folded arms, and face a little uptilted. His knees were straight and massive. She sighed, picked up the poker, and again began to prod the fire, to rouse the clouds of soft brilliant sparks.

"Isabel tells me," Bertie began suddenly, "that you have not suffered unbearably from the loss of sight."

Maurice straightened himself to attend but kept his arms folded.

"No," he said, "not unbearably. Now and again one struggles against it, you know. But there are compensations."

"They say it is much worse to be stone deaf," said Isabel.

"I believe it is," said Bertie. "Are there compensations?" he added to Maurice.

"Yes. You cease to bother about a great many things." Again Maurice stretched his figure, stretched the strong muscles of his back, and leaned backwards, with uplifted face.

"And that is a relief," said Bertie. "But what is there in place of the bothering? What replaces the activity?"

There was a pause. At length the blind man replied, as out of a negligent, unattentive thinking.

"Oh, I don't know. There's a good deal when you're not active."

"Is there?" said Bertie. "What exactly? It always seems to me that when there is no thought and no action, there is nothing."

Again Maurice was slow in replying.

"There is something," he replied. "I couldn't tell you what it is."

And the talk lapsed once more, Isabel and Bertie chatting gossip and reminiscence, the blind man silent.

At length Maurice rose restlessly, a big obtrusive figure. He felt tight and hampered. He wanted to go away.

"Do you mind," he said, "if I go and speak to Wernham?"

"No—go along, dear," said Isabel.

And he went out. A silence came over the two friends. At length Bertie said:

"Nevertheless, it is a great deprivation, Cissie."

"It is, Bertie. I know it is."

"Something lacking all the time," said Bertie.



"Yes, I know And yet—and yet—Maurice is right There is something else, something there, which you never knew was there, and which you can't express "

"What is there?" asked Bertie

"I don't know—it's awfully hard to define it—but something strong and immediate There's something strange in Maurice's presence—indefinable—but I couldn't do without it I agree that it seems to put one's mind to sleep But when we're alone I miss nothing, it seems awfully rich, almost splendid, you know "

"I'm afraid I don't follow," said Bertie

They talked desultorily The wind blew loudly outside, rain chattered on the window-panes, making a sharp drum-sound because of the closed, mellow-golden shutters inside The logs burned slowly, with hot, almost invisible small flames Bertie seemed uneasy, there were dark circles round his eyes Isabel, rich with her approaching maternity, leaned looking into the fire Her hair curled in odd, loose strands, very pleasing to the man But she had a curious feeling of old woe in her heart, old timeless night-woe

"I suppose we're all deficient somewhere," said Bertie

"I suppose so," said Isabel wearily

"Damned, sooner or later "

"I don't know," she said, rousing herself "I feel quite all right, you know The child coming seems to make me indifferent to everything, just placid I can't feel that there's anything to trouble about, you know "

"A good thing, I should say," he replied slowly

"Well, there it is I suppose it's just Nature If only I felt I needn't trouble about Maurice, I should be perfectly content—"

"But you feel you must trouble about him?"

"Well—I don't know—" She even resented this much effort

The night passed slowly Isabel looked at the clock "I say," she said "It's nearly ten o'clock Where can Maurice be? I'm sure they're all in bed at the back Excuse me a moment "

She went out, returning almost immediately

"It's all shut up and in darkness," she said "I wonder where he is He must have gone out to the farm—"

Bertie looked at her

"I suppose he'll come in," he said

"I suppose so," she said "But it's unusual for him to be out now "

"Would you like me to go out and see?"

"Well—if you wouldn't mind I'd go, but—" She did not want to make the physical effort

Bertie put on an old overcoat and took a lantern He went out from the side door He shrank from the wet and roaring night Such weather had a nervous effect on him too much moisture everywhere made him feel almost imbecile Unwilling, he went through it all A dog barked violently at him He peered in all the buildings At last, as he opened the upper door of a sort of intermediate barn, he heard a grinding noise, and

looking in, holding up his lantern, saw Maurice, in his shirtsleeves, standing listening, holding the handle of a turnip-pulper. He had been pulping sweet roots, a pile of which lay dimly heaped in a corner behind him.

"That you, Wernham?" said Maurice, listening.

"No, it's me," said Bertie.

A large, half-wild grey cat was rubbing at Maurice's leg. The blind man stooped to rub its sides. Bertie watched the scene, then unconsciously entered and shut the door behind him. He was in a high sort of barn-place, from which, right and left, ran off the corridors in front of the stalled cattle. He watched the slow, stooping motion of the other man, as he caressed the great cat.

Maurice straightened himself.

"You came to look for me?" he said.

"Isabel was a little uneasy," said Bertie.

"I'll come in. I like messing about doing these jobs."

The cat had reared her sinister, feline length against his leg, clawing at his thigh affectionately. He lifted her claws out of his flesh.

"I hope I'm not in your way at all at the Grange here," said Bertie, rather shy and stiff.

"My way? No, not a bit. I'm glad Isabel has somebody to talk to. I'm afraid it's I who am in the way. I know I'm not very lively company. Isabel's all right, don't you think? She's not unhappy, is she?"

"I don't think so."

"What does she say?"

"She says she's very content—only a little troubled about you."

"Why me?"

"Perhaps afraid that you might brood," said Bertie, cautiously.

"She needn't be afraid of that." He continued to caress the flattened grey head of the cat with his fingers. "What I am a bit afraid of," he resumed, "is that she'll find me a dead weight, always alone with me down here."

"I don't think you need think that," said Bertie, though this was what he feared himself.

"I don't know," said Maurice. "Sometimes I feel it isn't fair that she's saddled with me." Then he dropped his voice curiously. "I say," he asked, secretly struggling, "is my face much disfigured? Do you mind telling me?"

"There is the scar," said Bertie, wondering. "Yes, it is a disfigurement. But more pitiable than shocking."

"A pretty bad scar, though," said Maurice.

"Oh, yes."

There was a pause.

"Sometimes I feel I am horrible," said Maurice, in a low voice, talking as if to himself. And Bertie actually felt a quiver of horror.

"That's nonsense," he said.

Maurice again straightened himself, leaving the cat.

"There's no telling," he said. Then again, in an odd tone, he added "I don't really know you, do I?"



their footsteps sounded strange. She looked up pathetically and anxiously for their entrance. There seemed a curious elation about Maurice. Bertie was haggard, with sunken eyes.

"What is it?" she asked.

"We've become friends," said Maurice, standing with his feet apart, like a strange colossus.

"Friends!" re-echoed Isabel. And she looked again at Bertie. He met her eyes with a furtive, haggard look, his eyes were as if glazed with misery.

"I'm so glad," she said, in sheer perplexity.

"Yes," said Maurice.

He was indeed so glad. Isabel took his hand with both hers, and held it fast.

"You'll be happier now, dear," she said.

But she was watching Bertie. She knew that he had one desire—to escape from this intimacy, this friendship, which had been thrust upon him. He could not bear it that he had been touched by the blind man, his insane reserve broken in. He was like a mollusc whose shell is broken.

## I

I had done a few things and earned a few pence—I had perhaps even had time to begin to think I was finer than was perceived by the patronising, but when I take the little measure of my course (a fidgety habit, for it's none of the longest yet) I count my real start from the evening George Corvick, breathless and worried, came in to ask me a service. He had done more things than I, and earned more pence, though there were chances for cleverness I thought he sometimes missed. I could only, however, that evening declare to him that he never missed one for kindness. There was almost rapture in hearing it proposed to me to prepare for *The Middle*, the organ of our lucubrations, so called from the position in the week of its day of appearance, an article for which he had made himself responsible and of which, tied up with a stout string, he laid on my table the subject. I pounced upon my opportunity—that is on the first volume of it—and paid scant attention to my friend's explanation of his appeal. What explanation could be more to the point than my obvious fitness for the task? I had written on Hugh Vereker, but never a word in *The Middle*, where my dealings were mainly with the ladies and the minor poets. This was his new novel, an advance copy, and whatever much or little it should do for his reputation I was clear on the spot as to what it should do for mine. Moreover if I always read him as soon as I could get hold of him I had a particular reason for wishing to read him now. I had accepted an invitation to Bridges for the following Sunday, and it had been mentioned in Lady Jane's note that Mr Vereker was to be there. I was young enough for a flutter at meeting a man of his renown, and innocent enough to believe the occasion would demand the display of an acquaintance with his "last."

Corvick, who had promised a review of it, had not even had time to read it, he had gone to pieces in consequence of news requiring—as on precipitate reflexion he judged—that he should catch the night-mail to Paris. He had had a telegram from Gwendolen Erme in answer to his letter offering to fly to her aid. I knew already about Gwendolen Erme, I had never seen her, but I had my ideas, which were mainly to the effect that Corvick would marry her if her mother would only die. That lady seemed now in a fair way to oblige him, after some dreadful mistake.

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about a climate or a "cure" she had suddenly collapsed on the return from abroad. Her daughter, unsupported and alarmed, desiring to make a rush for home but hesitating at the risk, had accepted our friend's assistance, and it was my secret belief that at sight of him Mrs Erme would pull round. His own belief was scarcely to be called secret, it discernibly at any rate differed from mine. He had showed me Gwendolen's photograph with the remark that she wasn't pretty but was awfully interesting, she had published at the age of nineteen a novel in three volumes, "Deep Down," about which, in *The Middle*, he had been really splendid. He appreciated my present eagerness and undertook that the periodical in question should do no less, then at the last, with his hand on the door, he said to me "Of course you'll be all right, you know." Seeing I was a trifle vague he added "I mean you won't be silly."

"Silly—about Vereker! Why what do I ever find him but awfully clever?"

"Well, what's that but silly? What on earth does 'awfully clever' mean? For God's sake try to get *at* him. Don't let him suffer by our arrangement. Speak of him, you know, if you can, as *I* should have spoken of him."

I wondered an instant "You mean as far and away the biggest of the lot—that sort of thing?"

Corvick almost groaned "Oh you know, I don't put them back to back that way, it's the infancy of art! But he gives me a pleasure so rare, the sense of"—he mused a little—"something or other."

I wondered again "The sense, pray, of what?"

"My dear man, that's just what I want *you* to say!"

Even before he had banged the door I had begun, book in hand, to prepare myself to say it. I sat up with Vereker half the night, Corvick couldn't have done more than that. He was awfully clever—I stuck to that, but he wasn't a bit the biggest of the lot. I didn't allude to the lot, however, I flattered myself that I emerged on this occasion from the infancy of art. "It's all right," they declared vividly at the office, and when the number appeared I felt there was a basis on which I could meet the great man. It gave me confidence for a day or two—then that confidence dropped. I had fancied him reading it with relish, but if Corvick wasn't satisfied how could Vereker himself be? I reflected indeed that the heat of the admirer was sometimes grosser even than the appetite of the scribe. Corvick at all events wrote me from Paris a little ill-humouredly. Mrs Erme was pulling round, and I hadn't at all said what Vereker gave him the sense of.

## II

The effect of my visit to Bridges was to turn me out for more profundity. Hugh Vereker, as I saw him there, was of a contact so void of angles that I blushed for the poverty of imagination involved in my small precautions. If he was in spirits it wasn't because he had read my review, in fact on the Sunday morning I felt sure he hadn't read it, though *The Middle* had

been out three days and bloomed, I assured myself, in the stuff garden of periodicals which gave one of the ormolu tables the air of a stand at a station. The impression he made on me personally was such that I wished him to read it, and I corrected to this end with a surreptitious hand what might be wanting in the careless conspicuity of the sheet. I'm afraid I even watched the result of my manoeuvre, but up to luncheon I watched in vain.

When afterwards, in the course of our gregarious walk, I found myself for half an hour, not perhaps without another manoeuvre, at the great man's side, the result of his affability was a still livelier desire that he shouldn't remain in ignorance of the peculiar justice I had done him. It wasn't that he seemed to thirst for justice, on the contrary I hadn't yet caught in his talk the faintest grunt of a grudge—a note for which my young experience had already given me an ear. Of late he had had more recognition, and it was pleasant, as we used to say in *The Middle*, to see how it drew him out. He wasn't of course popular, but I judged one of the sources of his good humour to be precisely that his success was independent of that. He had none the less become in a manner the fashion, the critics at least had put on a spurt and caught up with him. We had found out at last how clever he was, and he had had to make the best of the loss of his mystery. I was strongly tempted, as I walked beside him, to let him know how much of that unveiling was my act, and there was a moment when I probably should have done so had not one of the ladies of our party, snatching a place at his other elbow, just then appealed to him in a spirit comparatively selfish. It was very discouraging. I almost felt the liberty had been taken with myself.

I had had on my tongue's end, for my own part, a phrase or two about the right word at the right time, but later on I was glad not to have spoken, for when on our return we clustered at tea I perceived Lady Jane, who had not been out with us, brandishing *The Middle* with her longest arm. She had taken it up at her leisure, she was delighted with what she had found, and I saw that, as a mistake in a man may often be a felicity in a woman, she would practically do for me what I hadn't been able to do for myself. "Some sweet little truths that needed to be spoken," I heard her declare, thrusting the paper at rather a bewildered couple by the fireplace. She grabbed it away from them again on the reappearance of Hugh Vereker, who after our walk had been upstairs to change something. "I know you don't in general look at this kind of thing, but it's an occasion really for doing so. You *haven't* seen it? Then you must. The man has actually got *at* you, at what *I* always feel, you know." Lady Jane threw into her eyes a look evidently intended to give an idea of what she always felt, but she added that she couldn't have expressed it. The man in the paper expressed it in a striking manner. "Just see there, and there, where I've dashed it, how he brings it out." She had literally marked for him the brightest patches of my prose, and if I was a little amused Vereker himself may well have been. He showed how much he was when before us all Lady Jane wanted to read something aloud. I liked at any rate the way he defeated her purpose by jerking the paper affectionately out

of her clutch. He'd take it upstairs with him and look at it on going to dress. He did this half an hour later—I saw it in his hand when he repaired to his room. That was the moment at which, thinking to give her pleasure, I mentioned to Lady Jane that I was the author of the review. I did give her pleasure, I judged, but perhaps not quite so much as I had expected. If the author was "only me" the thing didn't seem quite so remarkable. Hadn't I had the effect rather of diminishing the lustre of the article than of adding to my own? Her ladyship was subject to the most extraordinary drops. It didn't matter, the only effect I cared about was the one it would have on Vereker up there by his bedroom fire.

At dinner I watched for the signs of this impression, tried to fancy some happier light in his eyes, but to my disappointment Lady Jane gave me no chance to make sure. I had hoped she'd call triumphantly down the table, publicly demand if she hadn't been right. The party was large—there were people from outside as well, but I had never seen a table long enough to deprive Lady Jane of a triumph. I was just reflecting in truth that this interminable board would deprive *me* of one when the guest next me, dear woman—she was Miss Poyle, the vicar's sister, a robust unmodulated person—had the happy inspiration and the unusual courage to address herself across it to Vereker, who was opposite, but not directly, so that when he replied they were both leaning forward. She inquired, artless body, what he thought of Lady Jane's "panegyric," which she had read—not connecting it however with her right-hand neighbour, and while I strained my ear for his reply I heard him, to my stupefaction, call back gaily, his mouth full of bread: "Oh it's all right—the usual twaddle!"

I had caught Vereker's glance as he spoke, but Miss Poyle's surprise was a fortunate cover for my own. "You mean he doesn't do you justice?" said the excellent woman.

Vereker laughed out, and I was happy to be able to do the same. "It's a charming article," he tossed us.

Miss Poyle thrust her chin half across the cloth. "Oh you're so deep!" she drove home.

"As deep as the ocean! All I pretend is that the author doesn't see—" But a dish was at this point passed over his shoulder, and we had to wait while he helped himself.

"Doesn't see what?" my neighbour continued.

"Doesn't see anything."

"Dear me—how very stupid!"

"Not a bit," Vereker laughed again. "Nobody does."

The lady on his further side appealed to him and Miss Poyle sank back to myself. "Nobody sees anything!" she cheerfully announced, to which I replied that I had often thought so too, but had somehow taken the thought for a proof on my own part of a tremendous eye. I didn't tell her the article was mine, and I observed that Lady Jane, occupied at the end of the table, had not caught Vereker's words.

I rather avoided him after dinner, for I confess he struck me as cruelly conceited, and the revelation was a pain. "The usual twaddle"—my acute



little study! That one's admiration should have had a reserve or two could gall him to that point? I had thought him placid, and he was placid enough, such a surface was the hard polished glass that encased the bauble of his vanity I was really ruffled, and the only comfort was that if nobody saw anything George Corvick was quite as much out of it as I This comfort however was not sufficient, after the ladies had dispersed, to carry me in the proper manner—I mean in a spotted jacket and humming an air—into the smoking-room I took my way in some dejection to bed, but in the passage I encountered Mr Vereker, who had been up once more to change, coming out of his room *He* was humming an air and had on a spotted jacket, and as soon as he saw me his gaiety gave a start

"My dear young man," he exclaimed, "I'm so glad to lay hands on you! I'm afraid I most unwittingly wounded you by those words of mine at dinner to Miss Poyle I learned but half an hour ago from Lady Jane that you're the author of the little notice in *The Middle*

I protested that no bones were broken, but he moved with me to my own door, his hand, on my shoulder, kindly feeling for a fracture, and on hearing that I had come up to bed he asked leave to cross my threshold and just tell me in three words what his qualification of my remarks had represented It was plain he really feared I was hurt, and the sense of his solicitude suddenly made all the difference to me My cheap review fluttered off into space, and the best things I had said in it became flat enough beside the brilliancy of his being there I can see him there still, on my rug, in the firelight and his spotted jacket, his fine clear face all bright with the desire to be tender to my youth I don't know what he had at first meant to say, but I think the sight of my relief touched him, excited him, brought up words to his lips from far within It was so these words presently conveyed to me something that, as I afterwards knew, he had never uttered to anyone I've always done justice to the generous impulse that made him speak, it was simply compunction for a snub unconsciously administered to a man of letters in a position inferior to his own, a man of letters moreover in the very act of praising him To make the thing right he talked to me exactly as an equal and on the ground of what we both loved best The hour, the place, the unexpectedness deepened the impression he couldn't have done anything more intensely effective

### III

"I don't quite know how to explain it to you," he said, "but it was the very fact that your notice of my book had a spice of intelligence, it was just your exceptional sharpness, that produced the feeling—a very old story with me, I beg you to believe—under the momentary influence of which I used in speaking to that good lady the words you so naturally resent I don't read the things in the newspapers unless they're thrust upon me as that one was—it's always one's best friend who does it! But I used to read them sometimes—ten years ago I dare say they were in general rather stupider then, at any rate it always struck me they missed my little

point with a perfection exactly as admirable when they patted me on the back as when they kicked me in the shins. Whenever since I've happened to have a glimpse of them they were still blazing away—still missing it, I mean, deliciously. *You* miss it, my dear fellow, with inimitable assurance, the fact of your being awfully clever and your article's being awfully nice doesn't make a hair's breadth of difference. It's quite with you rising young men," Vereker laughed, "that I feel most what a failure I am!"

I listened with keen interest, it grew keener as he talked. '*You* a failure—heavens! What then may your 'little point' happen to be?"

"Have I got to *tell* you, after all these years and labours?" There was something in the friendly reproach of this—jocosely exaggerated—that made me, as an ardent young seeker for truth, blush to the roots of my hair. I'm as much in the dark as ever, though I've grown used in a sense to my obtuseness, at that moment, however, Vereker's happy accent made me appear to myself, and probably to him, a rare dunce. I was on the point of exclaiming "Ah yes, don't tell me for my honour, for that of the craft, don't!" when he went on in a manner that showed he had read my thought and had his own idea of the probability of our some day redeeming ourselves. "By my little point I mean—what shall I call it?—the particular thing I've written my books most *for*. Isn't there for every writer a particular thing of that sort, the thing that most makes him apply himself, the thing without the effort to achieve which he wouldn't write at all, the very passion of his passion, the part of the business in which, for him, the flame of art burns most intensely? Well, it's *that*!"

I considered a moment—that is I followed at a respectful distance, rather gasping. I was fascinated—easily, you'll say, but I wasn't going after all to be put off my guard. "Your description's certainly beautiful, but it doesn't make what you describe very distinct."

"I promise you it would be distinct if it should dawn on you at all." I saw that the charm of our topic overflowed for my companion into an emotion as lively as my own. "At any rate," he went on, "I can speak for myself: there's an idea in my work without which I wouldn't have given a straw for the whole job. It's the finest fullest intention of the lot, and the application of it has been, I think, a triumph of patience, of ingenuity. I ought to leave that to somebody else to say, but that nobody does say it is precisely what we're talking about. It stretches, this little trick of mine, from book to book, and everything else, comparatively, plays over the surface of it. The order, the form, the texture of my books will perhaps someday constitute for the initiated a complete representation of it. So it's naturally the thing for the critic to look for. It strikes me," my visitor added, smiling, "even as the thing for the critic to find."

This seemed a responsibility indeed. "You call it a little trick?"

"That's only my little modesty. It's really an exquisite scheme."

"And you hold that you've carried the scheme out?"

"The way I've carried it out is the thing in life I think a bit well of myself for."

I had a pause. "Don't you think you ought—just a trifle—to assist the critic?"

"Assist him? What else have I done with every stroke of my pen? I've shouted my intention in his great blank face!" At this, laughing out again Vereker laid his hand on my shoulder to show the allusion wasn't to my personal appearance

"But you talk about the initiated There must therefore, you see, *be* initiation "

"What else in heaven's name is criticism supposed to be?" I'm afraid I coloured at this too, but I took refuge in repeating that his account of his silver lining was poor in something or other that a plain man knows things by "That's only because you've never had a glimpse of it," he returned "If you had had one the element in question would soon have become practically all you'd see To me it's exactly as palpable as the marble of this chimney Besides, the critic just *isn't* a plain man if he were, pray, what would he be doing in his neighbour's garden? You're anything but a plain man yourself, and the very *raison d'être* of you all is that you're little demons of subtlety If my great affair's a secret, that's only because it's a secret in spite of itself—the amazing event has made it one I not only never took the smallest precaution to keep it so, but never dreamed of any such accident If I had I shouldn't in advance have had the heart to go on As it was, I only became aware little by little, and meanwhile I had done my work "

"And now you quite like it?" I risked

"My work?"

"Your secret It's the same thing "

"Your guessing that," Vereker replied, "is a proof that you're as clever as I say!" I was encouraged by this to remark that he would clearly be pained to part with it, and he confessed that it was indeed with him now the great amusement of life "I live almost to see if it will ever be detected" He looked at me for a jesting challenge, something far within his eyes seemed to peep out "But I needn't worry—it won't!"

"You fire me as I've never been fired," I declared, "you make me determined to do or die " Then I asked "Is it a kind of esoteric message?"

His countenance fell at this—he put out his hand as if to bid me good-night Ah my dear fellow, it can't be described in cheap journalese!"

I knew of course he'd be awfully fastidious, but our talk had made me feel how much his nerves were exposed I was unsatisfied—I kept hold of his hand "I won't make use of the expression then," I said, "in the article in which I shall eventually announce my discovery, though I dare say I shall have hard work to do without it But meanwhile, just to hasten that difficult birth, can't you give a fellow a clue?" I felt much more at my ease

"My whole lucid effort gives him the clue—every page and line and letter The thing's as concrete there as a bird in a cage, a bait on a hook, a piece of cheese in a mouse-trap It's stuck into every volume as your foot is stuck into your shoe It governs every line, it chooses every word, it dots every *i*, it places every comma "

I scratched my head "Is it something in the style or something in the thought? An element of form or an element of feeling?"

He indulgently shook my hand again, and I felt my questions to be crude and my distinctions pitiful "Good-night, my dear boy—don't bother about it After all, you do like a fellow "

"And a little intelligence might spoil it?" I still detained him

He hesitated "Well, you've got a heart in your body Is that an element of form or an element of feeling? What I contend that nobody has ever mentioned in my work is the organ of life "

"I see—it's some idea *about* life, some sort of philosophy Unless it be," I added with the eagerness of a thought perhaps still happier, "some kind of game you're up to with your style, something you're after in the language Perhaps it's a preference for the letter P!" I ventured profanely to break out "Papa, potatoes, prunes—that sort of thing?" He was suitably indulgent he only said I hadn't got the right letter But his amusement was over, I could see he was bored There was nevertheless something else I had absolutely to learn "Should you be able, pen in hand, to state it clearly yourself—to name it, phrase it, formulate it?"

"Oh," he almost passionately sighed, "if I were only, pen in hand, one of *you* chaps!"

"That would be a great chance for you of course But why should you despise us chaps for not doing what you can't do yourself?"

"Can't do?" He opened his eyes "Haven't I done it in twenty volumes? I do it in my way," he continued "Go *you* and do it in yours "

"Ours is so devilish difficult," I weakly observed

"So's mine! We each choose our own There's no compulsion You won't come down and smoke?"

"No I want to think this thing out "

"You'll tell me then in the morning that you've laud me bare?"

"I'll see what I can do, I'll sleep on it But just one word more," I added We had left the room—I walked again with him a few steps along the passage "This extraordinary 'general intention,' as you call it—for that's the most vivid description I can induce you to make of it—is then, generally, a sort of buried treasure?"

His face lighted "Yes, call it that, though it's perhaps not for me to do so "

"Nonsense!" I laughed "You know you're hugely proud of it "

"Well, I didn't propose to tell you so, but it *is* the joy of my soul!"

"You mean it's a beauty so rare, so great?"

He waited a little again "The loveliest thing in the world!" We had stopped, and on these words he left me, but at the end of the corridor, while I looked after him rather yearningly, he turned and caught sight of my puzzled face It made him earnestly, indeed I thought quite anxiously, shake his head and wave his finger "Give it up—give it up!"

This wasn't a challenge—it was fatherly advice If I had had one of his books at hand I'd have repeated my recent act of faith—I'd have spent half the night with him At three o'clock in the morning, not sleeping, remembering moreover how indispensable he was to Lady Jane, I stole down to the library with a candle There wasn't, so far as I could discover, a line of his writing in the house,

## IV

Returning to town I feverishly collected them all, I picked out each in its order and held it up to the light. This gave me a maddening month in the course of which several things took place. One of these, the last, I may as well immediately mention, was that I acted on Vereker's advice. I renounced my ridiculous attempt. I could really make nothing of the business, it proved a dead loss. After all I had always, as he had himself noted, liked him, and what now occurred was simply that my new intelligence and vain preoccupation damaged my liking. I not only failed to run a general intention to earth, I found myself missing the subordinate intentions I had formerly enjoyed. His books didn't even remain the charming things they had been for me, the exasperation of my search put me out of conceit of them. Instead of being a pleasure the more they became a resource the less, for from the moment I was unable to follow up the author's hint I of course felt it a point of honour not to make use professionally of my knowledge of them. I *had* no knowledge—nobody had any. It was humiliating, but I could bear it—they only annoyed me now. At last they even bored me, and I accounted for my confusion—perversely, I allow—by the idea that Vereker had made a fool of me. The buried treasure was a bad joke, the general intention a monstrous *pose*.

The great point of it all is, however, that I told George Corvick what had befallen me and that my information had an immense effect on him. He had at last come back, but so, unfortunately, had Mrs. Erme, and there was as yet, I could see, no question of his nuptials. He was immensely stirred up by the anecdote I had brought from Bridges, it fell in so completely with the sense he had had from the first that there was more in Vereker than met the eye. When I remarked that the eye seemed what the printed page had been expressly invented to meet he immediately accused me of being spiteful because I had been foiled. Our commerce had always that pleasant latitude. The thing Vereker had mentioned to me was exactly the thing he, Corvick, had wanted me to speak of in my review. On my suggesting at last that with the assistance I had now given him he would doubtless be prepared to speak of it himself he admitted freely that before doing this there was more he must understand. What he would have said, had he reviewed the new book, was that there was evidently in the writer's inmost art something to *be* understood. I hadn't so much as hinted at that—no wonder the writer hadn't been flattered! I asked Corvick what he really considered he meant by his own super-subtlety, and, unmistakably kindled, he replied, "It isn't for the vulgar—it isn't for the vulgar!" He had hold of the tail of something—he would pull hard, pull it right out. He pumped me dry on Vereker's strange confidence and, pronouncing me the luckiest of mortals, mentioned half-a-dozen questions he wished to goodness I had had the gumption to put. Yet on the other hand he didn't want to be told too much—it would spoil the fun of seeing what would come. The failure of *my* fun was at the moment of our meeting not complete, but I saw it ahead, and Corvick

saw that I saw it I, on my side, saw likewise that one of the first things he would do would be to rush off with my story to Gwendolen

On the very day after my talk with him I was surprised by the receipt of a note from Hugh Vereker, to whom our encounter at Bridges had been recalled, as he mentioned, by his falling, in a magazine, on some article to which my signature was attached "I read it with great pleasure," he wrote, "and remembered under its influence our lively conversation by your bedroom fire The consequence of this has been that I begin to measure the temerity of my having saddled you with a knowledge that you may find something of a burden Now that the fit's over I can't imagine how I came to be moved so much beyond my wont I had never before mentioned, no matter in what state of expansion, the fact of my little secret, and I shall never speak of that mystery again I was accidentally so much more explicit with you than it had ever entered into my game to be, that I find this game—I mean the pleasure of playing it—suffers considerably In short, if you can understand it, I've rather spoiled my sport I really don't want to give anybody what I believe you clever young men call the tip That's of course a selfish solicitude, and I name it to you for what it may be worth to you If you're disposed to humour me don't repeat my revelation Think me demented—it's your right, but don't tell anybody why"

The sequel to this communication was that as early on the morrow as I dared I drove straight to Mr Vereker's door He occupied in those years one of the honest old houses in Kensington Square He received me immediately, and as soon as I came in I saw I hadn't lost my power to minister to his mirth He laughed out at sight of my face, which doubtless expressed my perturbation I had been indiscreet—my compunction was great "I *have* told somebody," I panted, "and I'm sure that person will by this time have told somebody else! It's a woman, into the bargain"

"The person you've told?"

"No, the other person I'm quite sure he must have told her"

"For all the good it will do her—or do *me*! A woman will never find out"

"No, but she'll talk all over the place she'll do just what you don't want"

Vereker thought a moment, but wasn't so disconcerted as I had feared he felt that if the harm was done it only served him right "It doesn't matter—don't worry"

"I'll do my best, I promise you, that your talk with me shall go no further"

"Very good, do what you can"

"In the meantime," I pursued, "George Corvick's possession of the tip may, on his part, really lead to something"

"That will be a brave day"

I told him about Corvick's cleverness, his admiration, the intensity of his interest in my anecdote, and without making too much of the divergence of our respective estimates mentioned that my friend was already of opinion that he saw much further into a certain affair than most peo-

ple He was quite as fired as I had been at Bridges He was moreover in love with the young lady perhaps the two together would puzzle something out

Vereker seemed struck with this "Do you mean they're to be married?"

"I dare say that's what it will come to"

"That may help them," he conceded, "but we must give them time!"

I spoke of my own renewed assault and confessed my difficulties, whereupon he repeated his former advice "Give it up, give it up!" He evidently didn't think me intellectually equipped for the adventure I stayed half an hour, and he was most good-natured, but I couldn't help pronouncing him a man of unstable moods He had been free with me in a mood, he had repented in a mood, and now in a mood he had turned indifferent This general levity helped me to believe that, so far as the subject of the tip went, there wasn't much in it I contrived however to make him answer a few more questions about it, though he did so with visible impatience For himself, beyond doubt, the thing we were all so blank about was vividly there It was something, I guessed, in the primal plan, something like a complex figure in a Persian carpet He highly approved of this image when I used it, and he used another himself "It's the very string," he said, "that my pearls are strung on!" The reason of his note to me had been that he really didn't want to give us a grain of succour—our density was a thing too perfect in its way to touch He had formed the habit of depending on it, and if the spell was to break it must break by some force of its own He comes back to me from that last occasion—for I was never to speak to him again—as a man with some safe preserve for sport I wondered as I walked away where he had got *his* tip

## V

When I spoke to George Corvick of the caution I had received he made me feel that any doubt of his delicacy would be almost an insult He had instantly told Gwendolen, but Gwendolen's ardent response was in itself a pledge of discretion The question would now absorb them and would offer them a pastime too precious to be shared with the crowd They appeared to have caught instinctively at Vereker's high idea of enjoyment Their intellectual pride, however, was not such as to make them indifferent to any further light I might throw on the affair they had in hand They were indeed of the "artistic temperament," and I was freshly struck with my colleague's power to excite himself over a question of art He'd call it letters, he'd call it life, but it was all one thing In what he said I now seemed to understand that he spoke equally for Gwendolen, to whom, as soon as Mrs Erme was sufficiently better to allow her a little leisure, he made a point of introducing me I remember our going together one Sunday in August to a huddled house in Chelsea, and my renewed envy of Corvick's possession of a friend who had some light to mingle with his own He could say things to her that I could never say to him She had indeed no sense of humour and, with her pretty way of

holding her head on one side, was one of those persons whom you want, as the phrase is, to shake, but who have learnt Hungarian by themselves. She conversed perhaps in Hungarian with Corvick, she had remarkably little English for his friend. Corvick afterwards told me that I had chilled her by my apparent indisposition to oblige them with the detail of what Vereker had said to me. I allowed that I felt I had given thought enough to that indication—hadn't I even made up my mind that it was vain and would lead nowhere? The importance they attached to it was irritating and quite envenomed my doubts.

That statement looks unamiable, and what probably happened was that I felt humiliated at seeing other persons deeply beguiled by an experiment that had brought me only chagrin. I was out in the cold while, by the evening fire, under the lamp, they followed the chase for which I myself had sounded the horn. They did as I had done, only more deliberately and sociably—they went over their author from the beginning. There was no hurry, Corvick said—the future was before them and the fascination could only grow, they would take him page by page, as they would take one of the classics, inhale him in slow draughts and let him sink all the way in. They would scarce have got so wound up, I think, if they hadn't been in love. poor Vereker's inner meaning gave them endless occasion to put and to keep their young heads together. None the less it represented the kind of problem for which Corvick had a special aptitude, drew out the particular pointed patience of which, had he lived, he would have given more striking and, it is to be hoped, more fruitful examples. He at least was, in Vereker's words, a little demon of subtlety. We had begun by disputing, but I soon saw that without my stirring a finger his infatuation would have its bad hours. He would bound off on false scents as I had done—he would clap his hands over new lights and see them blown out by the wind of the turned page. He was like nothing, I told him, but the maniacs who embrace some bedlamitical theory of the cryptic character of Shakespeare. To this he replied that if we had had Shakespeare's own word for his being cryptic he would at once have accepted it. The case there was altogether different—we had nothing but the word of Mr Snooks. I returned that I was stupefied to see him attach such importance even to the word of Mr Vereker. He wanted thereupon to know if I treated Mr Vereker's word as a lie. I wasn't perhaps prepared, in my unhappy rebound, to go so far as that, but I insisted that till the contrary was proved I should view it as too fond an imagination. I didn't, I confess, say—I didn't at that time quite know—all I felt. Deep down, as Miss Erme would have said, I was uneasy, I was expectant. At the core of my disconcerted state—for my wonted curiosity lived in its ashes—was the sharpness of a sense that Corvick would at last probably come out somewhere. He made, in defence of his credulity, a great point of the fact that from of old, in his study of this genius, he had caught whiffs and hints of he didn't know what, faint wandering notes of a hidden music. That was just the rarity, that was the charm—it fitted so perfectly into what I reported.

If I returned on several occasions to the little house in Chelsea I dare



say it was as much for news of Vereker as for news of Miss Erme's ailing parent. The hours spent there by Corvick were present to my fancy as those of a chess-player bent with a silent scowl, all the lamplit winter, over his board and his moves. As my imagination filled it out the picture held me fast. On the other side of the table was a ghostlier form, the faint figure of an antagonist good-humouredly but a little wearily secure—an antagonist who leaned back in his chair with his hands in his pockets and a smile on his fine clear face. Close to Corvick, behind him, was a girl who had begun to strike me as pale and wasted and even, on more familiar view, as rather handsome, and who rested on his shoulder and hung on his moves. He would take up a chessman and hold it poised a while over one of the little squares, and then would put it back in its place with a long sigh of disappointment. The young lady, at this, would slightly but uneasily shift her position and look across, very hard, very long, very strangely, at their dim participant. I had asked them at an early stage of the business if it mightn't contribute to their success to have some closer communication with him. The special circumstances would surely be held to have given me a right to introduce them. Corvick immediately replied that he had no wish to approach the altar before he had prepared the sacrifice. He quite agreed with our friend both as to the delight and as to the honour of the chase—he would bring down the animal with his own rifle. When I asked him if Miss Erme were as keen a shot he said after thinking, "No, I'm ashamed to say she wants to set a trap. She'd give anything to see him, she says she requires another tip. She's really quite morbid about it. But she must play fair—she *shan't* see him!" he emphatically added. I wondered if they hadn't even quarrelled a little on the subject—a suspicion not corrected by the way he more than once exclaimed to me, "She's quite incredibly literary, you know—quite fantastically!" I remember his saying of her that she felt in italics and thought in capitals. "Oh when I've run him to earth," he also said, "then, you know, I shall knock at his door. Rather—I beg you to believe I'll have it from his own lips. 'Right you are, my boy, you've done it this time!' He shall crown me victor—with the critical laurel."

Meanwhile he really avoided the chances London life might have given him of meeting the distinguished novelist, a danger, however, that disappeared with Vereker's leaving England for an indefinite absence, as the newspapers announced—going to the south for motives connected with the health of his wife, which had long kept her in retirement. A year—more than a year—had elapsed since the incident at Bridges, but I had had no further sight of him. I think I was at bottom rather ashamed—I hated to remind him that, though I had irremediably missed his point, a reputation for acuteness was rapidly overtaking me. This scruple led me a dance, kept me out of Lady Jane's house, made me even decline, when in spite of my bad manners she was a second time so good as to make me a sign, an invitation to her beautiful seat. I once became aware of her under Vereker's escort at a concert, and was sure I was seen by them, but I slipped out without being caught. I felt, as on that occasion I splashed along in the rain, that I couldn't have done anything else, and yet I re-

member saying to myself that it was hard, was even cruel. Not only had I lost the books, but I had lost the man himself—they and their author had been alike spoiled for me. I knew too which was the loss I most regretted. I had taken to the man still more than I had ever taken to the books.

## VI

Six months after our friend had left England George Corvick, who made his living by his pen, contracted for a piece of work which imposed on him an absence of some length and a journey of some difficulty, and his undertaking of which was much of a surprise to me. His brother-in-law had become editor of a great provincial paper, and the great provincial paper, in a fine flight of fancy, had conceived the idea of sending a "special commissioner" to India. Special commissioners had begun, in the "metropolitan press," to be the fashion, and the journal in question must have felt it had passed too long for a mere country cousin. Corvick had no hand, I knew, for the big brush of the correspondent, but that was his brother-in-law's affair, and the fact that a particular task was not in his line was apt to be with himself exactly a reason for accepting it. He was prepared to out-Herod the metropolitan press, he took solemn precautions against priggishness, he exquisitely outraged taste. Nobody ever knew it—that offended principle was all his own. In addition to his expenses he was to be conveniently paid, and I found myself able to help him, for the usual fat book, to a plausible arrangement with the usual fat publisher. I naturally inferred that his obvious desire to make a little money was not unconnected with the prospect of a union with Gwendolen Erme. I was aware that her mother's opposition was largely addressed to his want of means and of lucrative abilities, but it so happened that, on my saying the last time I saw him something that bore on the question of his separation from our young lady, he brought out with an emphasis that startled me. "Ah I'm not a bit engaged to her, you know!"

"Not overtly," I answered, "because her mother doesn't like you. But I've always taken for granted a private understanding."

"Well, there *was* one. But there isn't now." That was all he said save something about Mrs. Erme's having got on her feet again in the most extraordinary way—a remark pointing, as I supposed, the moral that private understandings were of little use when the doctor didn't share them. What I took the liberty of more closely inferring was that the girl might in some way have estranged him. Well, if he had taken the turn of jealousy, for instance, it could scarcely be jealousy of me. In that case—over and above the absurdity of it—he wouldn't have gone away just to leave us together. For some time before his going we had indulged in no allusion to the buried treasure, and from his silence, which my reserve simply emulated, I had drawn a sharp conclusion. His courage had dropped, his ardour had gone the way of mine—this appearance at least he left me to scan. More than that he couldn't do, he couldn't face the triumph with which I might have greeted an explicit admission. He needn't have been

afraid, poor dear, for I had by this time lost all need to triumph. In fact I considered I showed magnanimity in not reproaching him with his collapse, for the sense of his having thrown up the game made me feel more than ever how much I at last depended on him. If Corvick had broken down I should never know, no one would be of any use if *he* wasn't. It wasn't a bit true I had ceased to care for knowledge, little by little my curiosity not only had begun to ache again, but had become the familiar torment of my days and my nights. There are doubtless people to whom torments of such an order appear hardly more natural than the contortions of disease, but I don't after all know why I should in this connexion so much as mention them. For the few persons, at any rate, abnormal or not, with whom my anecdote is concerned, literature was a game of skill, and skill meant courage, and courage meant honour, and honour meant passion, meant life. The stake on the table was a special substance and our roulette the revolving mind, but we sat round the green board as intently as the grim gamblers at Monte Carlo. Gwendolen Erme, for that matter, with her white face and her fixed eyes, was of the very type of the lean ladies one had met in the temples of chance. I recognised in Corvick's absence that she made this analogy vivid. It was extravagant, I admit, the way she lived for the art of the pen. Her passion visibly preyed on her, and in her presence I felt almost tepid. I got hold of "Deep Down" again: it was a desert in which she had lost herself, but in which too she had dug a wonderful hole in the sand—a cavity out of which Corvick had still more remarkably pulled her.

Early in March I had a telegram from her, in consequence of which I repaired immediately to Chelsea, where the first thing she said to me was "He has got it, he has got it!"

She was moved, as I could see, to such depths that she must mean the great thing "Vereker's idea?"

"His general intention. George has cabled from Bombay."

She had the missive open there, it was emphatic though concise "Eu reka Immense." That was all—he had saved the cost of the signature. I shared her emotion, but I was disappointed. "He doesn't say what it is."

"How could he—in a telegram? He'll write it."

"But how does he know?"

"Know it's the real thing? Oh I'm sure that when you see it you do know. *Vera incessu patuit dea*!"<sup>1</sup>

"It's you, Miss Erme, who are a 'dear' for bringing me such news!"—I went all lengths in my high spirits. "But fancy finding our goddess in the temple of Vishnu! How strange of George to have been able to go into the thing again in the midst of such different and such powerful solicitations!"

"He hasn't gone into it, I know, it's the thing itself, let severely alone for six months, that has simply sprung out at him like a tigress out of the jungle. He didn't take a book with him—on purpose, indeed he

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\* She shows by her walk that she is really a goddess, said of Venus appearing to Aeneas, in Virgil's *Aeneid* I 405.

wouldn't have needed to—he knows every page, as I do, by heart. They all worked in him together, and some day somewhere, when he wasn't thinking, they fell, in all their superb intricacy, into the one right combination. The figure in the carpet came out. That's the way he knew it would come and the real reason—you didn't in the least understand, but I suppose I may tell you now—why he went and why I consented to his going. We knew the change would do it—that the difference of thought, of scene, would give the needed touch, the magic shake. We had perfectly, we had admirably calculated. The elements were all in his mind, and in the *secousse* of a new and intense experience they just struck light." She positively struck light herself—she was literally, facially luminous. I stammered something about unconscious cerebration, and she continued "He'll come right home—this will bring him."

"To see Vereker, you mean?"

"To see Vereker—and to see *me*. Think what he'll have to tell me!"

I hesitated. "About India?"

"About fiddlesticks! About Vereker—about the figure in the carpet."

"But, as you say, we shall surely have that in a letter."

She thought like one inspired, and I remembered how Corvick had told me long before that her face was interesting. "Perhaps it can't be got into a letter if it's 'immense'."

"Perhaps not if it's immense bosh. If he has hold of something that can't be got into a letter he hasn't hold of *the* thing. Vereker's own statement to me was exactly that the 'figure' *would* fit into a letter."

"Well, I cabled to George an hour ago—two words," said Gwendolen.

"Is it indiscreet of me to ask what they were?"

She hung fire, but at last brought them out. "'Angel, write'."

"Good!" I cried. "I'll make it sure—I'll send him the same."

## VII

My words however were not absolutely the same—I put something instead of "angel", and in the sequel my epithet seemed the more apt, for when eventually we heard from our traveller it was merely, it was thoroughly to be tantalised. He was magnificent in his triumph, he described his discovery as stupendous, but his ecstasy only obscured it—there were to be no particulars till he should have submitted his conception to the supreme authority. He had thrown up his commission, he had thrown up his book, he had thrown up everything but the instant need to hurry to Rapallo, on the Genoese shore, where Vereker was making a stay. I wrote him a letter which was to await him at Aden—I besought him to relieve my suspense. That he had found my letter was indicated by a telegram which, reaching me after weary days and in the absence of any answer to my laconic dispatch to him at Bombay, was evidently intended as a reply to both communications. Those few words were in familiar French, the French of the day, which Corvick often made use of to show he wasn't a prig. It had for some persons the opposite effect, but his message may fairly be paraphrased "Have patience, I want to see, as it breaks on you,

the face you'll make!" "*Tellement envie de voir ta tête*"—that was what I had to sit down with I can certainly not be said to have sat down, for I seem to remember myself at this time as rattling constantly between the little house in Chelsea and my own Our impatience, Gwendolen's and mine, was equal, but I kept hoping her light would be greater We all spent during this episode, for people of our means, a great deal of money in telegrams and cabs, and I counted on the receipt of news from Rapallo immediately after the junction of the discoverer with the discovered The interval seemed an age, but late one day I heard a hansom precipitated to my door with the crash engendered by a hint of liberality I lived with my heart in my mouth and accordingly bounded to the window—a movement which gave me a view of a young lady erect on the footboard of the vehicle and eagerly looking up at my house At sight of me she flourished a paper with a movement that brought me straight down, the movement with which, in melodramas, handkerchiefs and reprieves are flourished at the foot of the scaffold

"Just seen Vereker—not a note wrong Pressed me to bosom—keeps me a month " So much I read on her paper while the cabby dropped a grin from his perch In my excitement I paid him profusely and in hers she suffered it, then as he drove away we started to walk about and talk We had talked, heaven knows, enough before, but this was a wondrous lift We pictured the whole scene at Rapallo, where he would have written, mentioning my name, for permission to call, that is I pictured it, having more material than my companion, whom I felt hang on my lips as we stopped on purpose before shop-windows we didn't look into About one thing we were clear if he was staying on for fuller communication we should at least have a letter from him that would help us through the dregs of delay We understood his staying on, and yet each of us saw, I think, that the other hated it The letter we were clear about arrived, it was for Gwendolen, and I called on her in time to save her the trouble of bringing it to me She didn't read it out, as was natural enough, but she repeated to me what it chiefly embodied This consisted of the remarkable statement that he'd tell her after they were married exactly what she wanted to know

"Only *then* when I'm his wife—not before," she explained "It's tantamount to saying— isn't it?—that I must marry him straight off" She smiled at me while I flushed with disappointment, a vision of fresh delay that made me at first unconscious of my surprise It seemed more than a hint that on me as well he would impose some tiresome condition Suddenly, while she reported several more things from his letter, I remembered what he had told me before going away He had found Mr Vereker deliriously interesting and his own possession of the secret a real intoxication The buried treasure was all gold and gems Now that it was there it seemed to grow and grow before him, it would have been, through all time and taking all tongues, one of the most wonderful flowers of literary art Nothing, in especial, once you were face to face with it, could show for more consummately *done* When once it came out it came out, was there with a splendour that made you ashamed, and there hadn't

been, save in the bottomless vulgarity of the age, with every one tasteless and tainted, every sense stopped, the smallest reason why it should have been overlooked. It was great, yet so simple, was simple, yet so great, and the final knowledge of it was an experience quite apart. He intimated that the charm of such an experience, the desire to drain it, in its freshness, to the last drop, was what kept him there close to the source. Gwendolen, frankly radiant as she tossed me these fragments, showed the elation of a prospect more assured than my own. That brought me back to the question of her marriage, prompted me to ask if what she meant by what she had just surprised me with was that she was under an engagement.

"Of course I am!" she answered. "Didn't you know it?" She seemed astonished, but I was still more so, for Corvick had told me the exact contrary. I didn't mention this, however, I only reminded her how little I had been on that score in her confidence, or even in Corvick's, and that moreover I wasn't in ignorance of her mother's interdict. At bottom I was troubled by the disparity of the two accounts, but after a little I felt Corvick's to be the one I least doubted. This simply reduced me to asking myself if the girl had on the spot improvised an engagement—vamped up an old one or dashed off a new—in order to arrive at the satisfaction she desired. She must have had resources of which I was destitute, but she made her case slightly more intelligible by returning presently, "What the state of things has been is that we felt of course bound to do nothing in mamma's lifetime."

"But now you think you'll just dispense with mamma's consent?"

"Ah it mayn't come to that!" I wondered what it might come to, and she went on. "Poor dear, she may swallow the dose. In fact, you know," she added with a laugh, "she really *must*"—a proposition of which, on behalf of everyone concerned, I fully acknowledged the force.

## VIII

Nothing more vexatious had ever happened to me than to become aware before Corvick's arrival in England that I shouldn't be there to put him through. I found myself abruptly called to Germany by the alarming illness of my younger brother, who, against my advice, had gone to Munich to study, at the feet indeed of a great master, the art of portraiture in oils. The near relative who made him an allowance had threatened to withdraw it if he should, under specious pretexts, turn for superior truth to Paris—Paris being somehow, for a Cheltenham aunt, the school of evil, the abyss. I deplored this prejudice at the time, and the deep injury of it was now visible—first in the fact that it hadn't saved the poor boy, who was clever, frail and foolish, from congestion of the lungs, and second in the greater break with London to which the event condemned me. I'm afraid that what was uppermost in my mind during several anxious weeks was the sense that if we had only been in Paris I might have run over to see Corvick. This was actually out of the question from every point of view. My brother, whose recovery gave us both plenty to do, was ill for three months, during which I never left him and at the end of which we had to face the absolute

prohibition of a return to England. The consideration of climate imposed itself, and he was in no state to meet it alone. I took him to Meran and there spent the summer with him, trying to show him by example how to get back to work and nursing a rage of another sort that I tried *not* to show him.

The whole business proved the first of a series of phenomena so strangely interlaced that, taken all together—which was how I had to take them—they form as good an illustration as I can recall of the manner in which, for the good of his soul doubtless, fate sometimes deals with a man's avidity. These incidents certainly had larger bearings than the comparatively meagre consequence we are here concerned with—though I feel that consequence also a thing to speak of with some respect. It's mainly in such a light, I confess at any rate, that the ugly fruit of my exile is at this hour present to me. Even at first indeed the spirit in which my avidity, as I have called it, made me regard that term owed no element of ease to the fact that before coming back from Rapallo George Corvick addressed me in a way I objected to. His letter had none of the sedative action I must to-day profess myself sure he had wished to give it, and the march of occurrences was not so ordered as to make up for what it lacked. He had begun on the spot, for one of the quarterlies, a great last word on Vereker's writings, and this exhaustive study, the only one that would have counted, have existed, was to turn on the new light, to utter—oh so quietly!—the unimagined truth. It was in other words to trace the figure in the carpet through every convolution, to reproduce it in every tint. The result, according to my friend, would be the greatest literary portrait ever painted, and what he asked of me was just to be so good as not to trouble him with questions till he should hang up his masterpiece before me. He did me the honour to declare that, putting aside the great sitter himself, all aloft in his indifference, I was individually the connoisseur he was most working for. I was therefore to be a good boy and not try to peep under the curtain before the show was ready. I should enjoy it all the more if I sat very still.

I did my best to sit very still, but I couldn't help giving a jump on seeing in *The Times* after I had been a week or two in Munich and before, as I knew, Corvick had reached London, the announcement of the sudden death of poor Mrs. Erme. I instantly, by letter, appealed to Gwendolen for particulars, and she wrote me that her mother had yielded to long-threatened failure of the heart. She didn't say, but I took the liberty of reading into her words, that from the point of view of her marriage and also of her eagerness, which was quite a match for mine, this was a solution more prompt than could have been expected and more radical than waiting for the old lady to swallow the dose. I candidly admit indeed that at the time—for I heard from her repeatedly—I read some singular things into Gwendolen's words and some still more extraordinary ones into her silences. Pen in hand, this way, I live the time over, and it brings back the oddest sense of my having been both for months and in spite of myself, a kind of coerced spectator. All my life had taken refuge in my eyes, which

the procession of events appeared to have committed itself to keep astare. There were days when I thought of writing to Hugh Vereker and simply throwing myself on his charity. But I felt more deeply that I hadn't fallen quite so low—besides which, quite properly, he would send me about my business. Mrs. Erme's death brought Corvick straight home, and within the month he was united "very quietly"—as quietly, I seemed to make out, as he meant in his article to bring out his *trouvaille*—to the young lady he had loved and quitted. I use this last term, I may parenthetically say, because I subsequently grew sure that at the time he went to India, at the time of his great news from Bombay, there had been no positive pledge between them whatever. There had been none at the moment she was affirming to me the very opposite. On the other hand he had certainly become engaged the day he returned. The happy pair went down to Torquay for their honeymoon, and there, in a reckless hour, it occurred to poor Corvick to take his young bride a drive. He had no command of that business. This had been brought home to me of old in a little tour we had once made together in a dogcart. In a dogcart he perched his companion for a rattle over Devonshire hills, on one of the likeliest of which he brought his horse, who, it was true, had bolted, down with such violence that the occupants of the cart were hurled forward and that he fell horribly on his head. He was killed on the spot, Gwendolen escaped unhurt.

I pass rapidly over the question of this unmitigated tragedy, of what the loss of my best friend meant for me, and I complete my little history of my patience and my pain by the frank statement of my having, in a postscript to my very first letter to her after the receipt of the hideous news, asked Mrs. Corvick whether her husband mightn't at least have finished the great article on Vereker. Her answer was as prompt as my question. The article, which had been barely begun, was a mere heartbreaking scrap. She explained that our friend, abroad, had just settled down to it when interrupted by her mother's death, and that then, on his return, he had been kept from work by the engrossments into which that calamity was to plunge them. The opening pages were all that existed, they were striking, they were promising, but they didn't unveil the idol. That great intellectual feat was obviously to have formed his climax. She said nothing more, nothing to enlighten me as to the state of her own knowledge—the knowledge for the acquisition of which I had fancied her prodigiously acting. This was above all what I wanted to know. Had *she* seen the idol unveiled? Had there been a private ceremony for a palpitating audience of one? For what else but that ceremony had the nuptials taken place? I didn't like as yet to press her, though when I thought of what had passed between us on the subject in Corvick's absence her reticence surprised me. It was therefore not till much later, from Meran, that I risked another appeal, risked it in some trepidation, for she continued to tell me nothing. "Did you hear in those few days of your blighted bliss," I wrote "what we desired so to hear?" I said "we" as a little hint, and she showed me she could take a little hint. "I heard everything," she replied, "and I mean to keep it to myself!"



## IX

It was impossible not to be moved with the strongest sympathy for her, and on my return to England I showed her every kindness in my power. Her mother's death had made her means sufficient, and she had gone to live in a more convenient quarter. But her loss had been great and her visitation cruel, it never would have occurred to me, moreover, to suppose she could come to feel the possession of a technical tip, of a piece of literary experience, a counterpoise to her grief. Strange to say, none the less, I couldn't help believing after I had seen her a few times that I caught a glimpse of some such oddity. I hasten to add that there had been other things I couldn't help believing, or at least imagining, and as I never felt I was really clear about these, so, as to the point I here touch on, I give her memory the benefit of the doubt. Stricken and solitary, highly accomplished and now, in her deep mourning, her maturer grace and her uncomplaining sorrow, incontestably handsome, she presented herself as leading a life of singular dignity and beauty. I had at first found a way to persuade myself that I should soon get the better of the reserve formulated, the week after the catastrophe, in her reply to an appeal as to which I was not unconscious that it might strike her as mistimed. Certainly that reserve was something of a shock to me—certainly it puzzled me the more I thought of it and even though I tried to explain it (with moments of success) by an imputation of exalted sentiments, of superstitious scruples, of a refinement of loyalty. Certainly it added at the same time hugely to the price of Vereker's secret, precious as this mystery already appeared. I may as well confess abjectly that Mrs. Corvick's unexpected attitude was the final tap on the nail that was to fix fast my luckless idea, convert it into the obsession of which I'm for ever conscious.

But this only helped me the more to be artful, to be adroit, to allow time to elapse before renewing my suit. There were plenty of speculations for the interval, and one of them was deeply absorbing. Corvick had kept his information from his young friend till after the removal of the last barrier to their intimacy—then only had he let the cat out of the bag. Was it Gwendolen's idea, taking a hint from him, to liberate this animal only on the basis of the renewal of such a relation? Was the figure in the carpet traceable or describable only for husbands and wives—for lovers supremely united? It came back to me in a mystifying manner that in Kensington Square, when I mentioned that Corvick would have told the girl he loved, some word had dropped from Vereker that gave colour to this possibility. There might be little in it, but there was enough to make me wonder if I should have to marry Mrs. Corvick to get what I wanted. Was I prepared to offer her this price for the blessing of her knowledge? Ah that way madness lay!—so I at least said to myself in bewildered hours. I could see meanwhile the torch she refused to pass on flame away in her chamber of memory—pour through her eyes a light that shone in her lonely house. At the end of six months I was fully sure of what this warm presence made up to her for. We had talked again and

again of the man who had brought us together—of his talent, his character, his personal charm, his certain career, his dreadful doom, and even of his clear purpose in that great study which was to have been a supreme literary portrait, a kind of critical Vandyke or Velasquez. She had conveyed to me in abundance that she was tongue-tied by her perversity, by her piety, that she would never break the silence it had not been given to the "right person," as she said, to break. The hour, however, finally arrived. One evening when I had been sitting with her longer than usual I laid my hand firmly on her arm. "Now at last what is it?"

She had been expecting me and was ready. She gave a long slow soundless headshake, merciful only in being inarticulate. This mercy didn't prevent its hurling at me the largest finest coldest "Never!" I had yet, in the course of a life that had known denials, had to take full in the face. I took it and was aware that with the hard blow the tears had come into my eyes. So for a while we sat and looked at each other, after which I slowly rose. I was wondering if some day she would accept me, but this was not what I brought out. I said as I smoothed down my hat. "I know what to think then. It's nothing!"

A remote disdainful pity for me gathered in her dim smile, then she spoke in a voice that I hear at this hour. "It's my *life*!" As I stood at the door she added. "You've insulted him!"

"Do you mean Vereker?"

"I mean the Dead!"

I recognised when I reached the street the justice of her charge. Yes, it was her life—I recognised that too, but her life none the less made room with the lapse of time for another interest. A year and a half after Corvick's death she published in a single volume her second novel, "Overmastered," which I pounced on in the hope of finding in it some tell-tale echo or some peeping face. All I found was a much better book than her younger performance, showing I thought the better company she had kept. As a tissue tolerably intricate it was a carpet with a figure of its own, but the figure was not the figure I was looking for. On sending a review of it to *The Middle* I was surprised to learn from the office that a notice was already in type. When the paper came out I had no hesitation in attributing this article, which I thought rather vulgarly overdone, to Drayton Deane, who in the old days had been something of a friend of Corvick's, yet had only within a few weeks made the acquaintance of his widow. I had had an early copy of the book, but Deane had evidently had an earlier. He lacked all the same the light hand with which Corvick had gilded the gingerbread—he laid on the tinsel in splotches.

## X

Six months later appeared "The Right of Way," the last chance, though we didn't know it, that we were to have to redeem ourselves. Written wholly during Vereker's sojourn abroad, the book had been heralded, in a hundred paragraphs, by the usual ineptitudes. I carried it, as early a copy

as any, I this time flattered myself, straightway to Mrs Corvick This was the only use I had for it, I left the inevitable tribute of *The Middle* to some more ingenious mind and some less irritated temper "But I already have it," Gwendolen said "Drayton Deane was so good as to bring it to me yesterday, and I've just finished it"

"Yesterday? How did he get it so soon?"

"He gets everything so soon! He's to review it in *The Middle*"

"He—Drayton Deane—review Vereker?" I couldn't believe my ears

"Why not? One fine ignorance is as good as another"

I winced but I presently said "You ought to review him yourself!"

"I don't 'review,'" she laughed "I'm reviewed!"

Just then the door was thrown open "Ah yes, here's your reviewer!" Drayton Deane was there with his long legs and his tall forehead he had come to see what she thought of "The Right of Way," and to bring news that was singularly relevant The evening papers were just out with a telegram on the author of that work, who, in Rome, had been ill for some days with an attack of malarial fever It had at first not been thought grave, but had taken, in consequence of complications, a turn that might give rise to anxiety Anxiety had indeed at the latest hour begun to be felt

I was struck in the presence of these tidings with the fundamental detachment that Mrs Corvick's overt concern quite failed to hide it gave me the measure of her consummate independence That independence rested on her knowledge, the knowledge which nothing now could destroy and which nothing could make different The figure in the carpet might take on another twist or two, but the sentence had virtually been written The writer might go down to his grave she was the person in the world to whom—as if she had been his favoured heir—his continued existence was least of a need This reminded me how I had observed at a particular moment—after Corvick's death—the drop of her desire to see him face to face She had got what she wanted without that I had been sure that if she hadn't got it she wouldn't have been restrained from the endeavour to sound him personally by those superior reflexions, more conceivable on a man's part than on a woman's, which in my case had served as a deterrent It wasn't however, I hasten to add, that my case, in spite of this invidious comparison, wasn't ambiguous enough At the thought that Vereker was perhaps at that moment dying there rolled over me a wave of anguish—a poignant sense of how inconsistently I still depended on him A delicacy that it was my one compensation to suffer to rule me had left the Alps and the Apennines between us, but the sense of the waning occasion suggested that I might in my despair at last have gone to him Of course I should really have done nothing of the sort I remained five minutes, while my companions talked of the new book, and when Drayton Deane appealed to me for my opinion of it I made answer, getting up, that I detested Hugh Vereker and simply couldn't read him I departed with the moral certainty that as the door closed behind me Deane would brand me for awfully superficial His hostess wouldn't contradict *that* at least

I continue to trace with a briefer touch our intensely odd successions. Three weeks after this came Vereker's death, and before the year was out the death of his wife. That poor lady I had never seen, but I had had a futile theory that, should she survive him long enough to be decorously accessible, I might approach her with the feeble flicker of my plea. Did she know and if she knew would she speak? It was much to be presumed that for more reasons than one she would have nothing to say, but when she passed out of all reach I felt renouncement indeed my appointed lot. I was shut up in my obsession for ever—my gaolers had gone off with the key. I find myself quite as vague as a captive in a dungeon about the time that further elapsed before Mrs. Corvick became the wife of Drayton Deane. I had foreseen, through my bars, this end of the business, though there was no indecent haste and our friendship had rather fallen off. They were both so "awfully intellectual" that it struck people as a suitable match, but I had measured better than any one the wealth of understanding the bride would contribute to the union. Never, for a marriage in literary circles—so the newspapers described the alliance—had a lady been so bravely dowered. I began with due promptness to look for the fruit of the affair—that fruit, I mean, of which the premonitory symptoms would be peculiarly visible in the husband. Taking for granted the splendour of the other party's nuptial gift, I expected to see him make a show commensurate with his increase of means. I knew what his means had been—his article on "The Right of Way" had distinctly given one the figure. As he was now exactly in the position in which still more exactly I was not, I watched from month to month, in the likely periodicals, for the heavy message poor Corvick had been unable to deliver and the responsibility of which would have fallen on his successor. The widow and wife would have broken by the rekindled hearth the silence that only a widow and wife might break, and Deane would be as aflame with the knowledge as Corvick in his own hour, as Gwendolen in hers, had been. Well, he was aflame doubtless, but the fire was apparently not to become a public blaze. I scanned the periodicals in vain. Drayton Deane filled them with exuberant pages, but he withheld the page I most feverishly sought. He wrote on a thousand subjects, but never on the subject of Vereker. His special line was to tell truths that other people either "fucked," as he said, or overlooked, but he never told the only truth that seemed to me in these days to signify. I met the couple in those literary circles referred to in the papers. I have sufficiently intimated that it was only in such circles we were all constructed to revolve. Gwendolen was more than ever committed to them by the publication of her third novel, and I myself definitely classed by holding the opinion that this work was inferior to its immediate predecessor. Was it worse because she had been keeping worse company? If her secret was, as she had told me, her life—a fact discernible in her increasing bloom, an air of conscious privilege that, cleverly corrected by pretty charities, gave distinction to her appearance—it had yet not a direct influence on her work. That only made one—everything only made one—yearn the more for it, only rounded it off with a mystery finer and subtler.

## XI

It was therefore from her husband I could never remove my eyes I beset him in a manner that might have made him uneasy I went even so far as to engage him in conversation *Didn't* he know, hadn't he come into it as a matter of course?—that question hummed in my brain Of course he knew, otherwise he wouldn't return my stare so queerly His wife had told him what I wanted and he was amiably amused at my impotence He didn't laugh—he wasn't a laugher his system was to present to my irritation, so that I should crudely expose myself, a conversational blank as vast as his big bare brow It always happened that I turned away with a settled conviction from these unpeopled expanses, which seemed to complete each other geographically and to symbolise together Drayton Deane's want of voice, want of form He simply hadn't the art to use what he knew, he literally was incompetent to take up the duty where Corvick had left it I went still further—it was the only glimpse of happiness I had I made up my mind that the duty didn't appeal to him He wasn't interested, he didn't care Yes, it quite comforted me to believe him too stupid to have joy of the thing I lacked He was as stupid after as he had been before, and that deepened for me the golden glory in which the mystery was wrapped I had of course none the less to recollect that his wife might have imposed her conditions and exactions I had above all to remind myself that with Vereker's death the major incentive dropped He was still there to be honoured by what might be done—he was no longer there to give it his sanction Who alas but he had the authority?

Two children were born to the pair, but the second cost the mother her life After this stroke I seemed to see another ghost of a chance I jumped at it in thought, but I waited a certain time for manners, and at last my opportunity arrived in a remunerative way His wife had been dead a year when I met Drayton Deane in the smoking-room of a small club of which we both were members, but where for months—perhaps because I rarely entered it—I hadn't seen him The room was empty and the occasion propitious I deliberately offered him, to have done with the matter for ever, that advantage for which I felt he had long been looking

"As an older acquaintance of your late wife's than even you were," I began, "you must let me say to you something I have on my mind I shall be glad to make any terms with you that you see fit to name for the information she must have had from George Corvick—the information, you know, that had come to *him*, poor chap, in one of the happiest hours of his life, straight from Hugh Vereker "

He looked at me like a dim phrenological bust "The information—?"

"Vereker's secret, my dear man—the general intention of his books the string the pearls were strung on, the buried treasure, the figure in the carpet "

He began to flush—the numbers on his bumps to come out "Vereker's books had a general intention?"

I stared in my turn "You don't mean to say you don't know it?" I thought for a moment he was playing with me 'Mrs Deane knew it, *she*

had it, as I say, straight from Corvick, who had, after infinite search and to Vereker's own delight, found the very mouth of the cave Where *is* the mouth? He told after their marriage—and told alone—the person who, when the circumstances were reproduced, must have told *you* Have I been wrong in taking for granted that she admitted you, as one of the highest privileges of the relation in which you stood to her, to the knowledge of which she was after Corvick's death the sole depository? All I know is that that knowledge is infinitely precious, and what I want you to understand is that if you'll in your turn admit me to it you'll do me a kindness for which I shall be lastingly grateful "

He had turned at last very red, I dare say he had begun by thinking I had lost my wits Little by little he followed me, on my own side I stared with a livelier surprise Then he spoke "I don't know what you're talking about "

He wasn't acting—it was the absurd truth "She *didn't* tell you—" "Nothing about Hugh Vereker "

I was stupefied, the room went round It had been too good even for that! "Upon your honour?"

"Upon my honour What the devil's the matter with you?" he growled

"I'm astounded—I'm disappointed I wanted to get it out of you "

"It isn't *in* me!" he awkwardly laughed "And even if it were—"

"If it were you'd let me have it—oh yes, in common humanity But I believe you I see—I see!" I went on, conscious, with the full turn of the wheel, of my great delusion, my false view of the poor man's attitude What I saw, though I couldn't say it, was that his wife hadn't thought him worth enlightening This struck me as strange for a woman who had thought him worth marrying At last I explained it by the reflexion that she couldn't possibly have married him for his understanding She had married him for something else

He was to some extent enlightened now, but he was even more astonished, more disconcerted he took a moment to compare my story with his quickened memories The result of his meditation was his presently saying with a good deal of rather feeble form "This is the first I hear of what you allude to I think you must be mistaken as to Mrs Drayton Deane's having had any unmentioned, and still less any unmentionable, knowledge of Hugh Vereker She'd certainly have wished it—should it have borne on his literary character—to be used "

"It was used She used it herself She told me with her own lips that she 'lived' on it "

I had no sooner spoken than I repented of my words, he grew so pale that I felt as if I had struck him "Ah 'lived'—" he murmured, turning short way from me

My compunction was real, I laid my hand on his shoulder "I beg you to forgive me—I've made a mistake You *don't* know what I thought you knew You could, if I had been right, have rendered me a service, and I had my reasons for assuming that you'd be in a position to meet me "

"Your reasons?" he echoed "What were your reasons?"

I looked at him well, I hesitated, I considered "Come and sit down with me here and I'll tell you " I drew him to a sofa, I lighted another cigar and, beginning with the anecdote of Vereker's one descent from the clouds, I recited to him the extraordinary chain of accidents that had, in spite of the original gleam, kept me till that hour in the dark I told him in a word just what I've written out here He listened with deepening attention, and I became aware, to my surprise, by his ejaculations, by his questions, that he would have been after all not unworthy to be trusted by his wife So abrupt an experience of her want of trust had now a disturbing effect on him, but I saw the immediate shock throb away little by little and then gather again into waves of wonder and curiosity—waves that promised, I could perfectly judge, to break in the end with the fury of my own highest tides I may say that to-day as victims of unappeased desire there isn't a pin to choose between us The poor man's state is almost my consolation, there are really moments when I feel it to be quite my revenge

Only in the one or two farmhouses about the lake, or in the fishing hotel at its edge—preoccupations of work and pleasure—does one ever forget the silence of the valley. Even in the winter, when the great cataracts slide down the mountain-face, the echoes of falling water are fitful: the winds fetch and carry them. In the summer a fisherman will hear the tinkle of the ghost of one of those falls only if he steals among the mirrored reeds under the pent of the cliffs, and withholds the splash of his oars. These tiny muted sounds will awe and delight him by the vacancy out of which they creep, intermittently.

One May evening a relaxed group of early visitors were helping themselves to drink in the hotel-bar, throwing the coins into a pint glass. There were five of them all looking out the door at the lake, the rhododendrons on the hermit's island, the mountain towering beyond it, and the wall of the blue air above the mountain line. Behind the counter was an American soldier, blonde, blankly handsome, his wide-vision glasses convexing the sky against his face. Leaning against the counter was a priest, jovial, fat, ruddy, his Roman collar off and his trousers stuck into his socks—he had been up the mountain all day rough-shooting. Leaning against the pink-washed wall was a dark young man with pince-nez, he had the smouldering ill-disposed eyes of the incorrigible Celt—"always eager to take offence" as the fourth of the party had privately cracked. She was a sturdy, red-mopped young woman in blue slacks now sitting on the counter drinking whisky. She sometimes seemed not at all beautiful, and sometimes her heavy features seemed to have a strong beauty of their own, for she was on a hair-trigger between a glowering Beethoven and The Laughing Cavalier. Sometimes her mouth was broody, suddenly it would expand into a half-batty gaiety. Her deep-set eyes ran from gloom to irony, to challenge, to wild humour. She had severe eyebrows that floated as gently as a veil in the wind. She was a Scot. The fifth of the group was a sack of a man, a big fat school-inspector, also with his collar off. He had cute ingratiating eyes. He leaned against the opposite pink-washed wall.

In the middle of the tiled floor was a very small man, a tramp with a fluent black beard, long black curls, a billycock hat, a mackintosh to his toes, and a gnarled stick with a hairy paw. The tramp (a whisper from the

*The Silence of the Valley* by Sean O'Faolain from *THE MAN WHO INVENTED SIN* by Sean O'Faolain published 1948 by The Devin Adair Company, New York. Copyright 1948 by The Devin Adair Company.



priest had informed them all that he had once been a waiter on the H head-Euston Express) held a pint of porter in his free hand and singing to them in a fine tenor voice a ballad called *Lonely I Wander from the Scenes of My Childhood*. They heard him in quizzical bored. He had been singing ballads to them on and off for nearly two hours.

Outside, the sun was seeping away behind the far end of the valley. From the bar they could see it touching the tips of the tallest rowan on the island. Across the lake the tip of a green cornfield on a hillock black and went out. Then vast beams, cutting through lesser defiles, flowed a yellow searchlight for miles to the open land to the east, picking great escarpments and odd projections of the mountains. The waves were by now blowing in sullenly on the shore, edging it with froth.

The tramp ended. They applauded perfunctorily. He knew they were satiated and when the red-headed young woman cried, "Tommy, give *The Inchigeela Puck Goat*," he demurred politely.

"I think, miss, ye have enough of me now, and sure I'm as dry as lime-kiln."

"More porter for the singer," cried the priest with lazy authority, the lieutenant willingly poured out another bottle of stout and rattled coin into the pint-glass.

"I suppose," asked the Celtic-looking young man, in a slightly critical voice, "you have no songs in Irish?"

"Now," soothed the school-inspector, "haven't you the Irish the whole bloody year round? Leave us take a holiday from it while we can."

"I had been under the impression," yielded the Celt, with a—*for him*—amicable smile, "that we came out here to learn the language of our fathers? Far be it from me to insist pedantically on the point." And smiled again like a stage curate.

"Tell me, brother," asked the American, as he filled up the tramp's glass, "do you remain on the road the whole year round?"

"Summer and winter, for fifteen years come next September, and no roof over my head but the field of stars. And would you believe it, never wance did I get as much as a shiver of a cold in my head."

"That is certainly a remarkable record."

The proprietor of the hotel entered the bar from the kitchen behind and planked a saucepan full of fowls' guts on the counter. He was accompanied by a small boy, long-lashed, almost pretty, obviously a city-child who kept dodging excitedly about him.

"Have any of ye a match," he asked. He was a powerful man, with shoulders of a horse. He wore neither coat nor vest. His cap was of poll. His face round and weather-beaten as a mangold. He had a mouth of false-teeth.

"What do you want a match for, Dinny?" asked the priest with a look at the others.

The American produced a match. Dinny deftly pinched a fold of his trousers between the eye of his suspenders and inserted the match through the fold. There it effectively did the work of a button. The priest tw

him around familiarly A nail had performed the same service behind They all laughed, but Dinny was too preoccupied to heed

"What's this mess for?" The American pointed to the stinking saucepan

Dinny paid no attention He stretched up over the top of the shelves and after much fumbling brought down a fishing-rod

"Give it to me, Dinny, give it to me," shouted the child

Dinny ignored him also as he fiddled with the line He glanced out the door, turned to the kitchen and roared

"Kitty cows coming home tell Patsy James have ye the buckets scalded bloisht it boys the day is gone "

Or he said something like that, for he mouthed all his words in his gullet and his teeth clacked and he spoke too fast They all turned back to watch the frieze of small black cows passing slowly before the scalloped water, the fawny froth, the wall of mountain

"The cobbler won't lasht the night," said Dinny, pulling with his teeth at the tangled pike-line The priest whirled

"Is he bad? Did you see him? Should I go down?"

"Still unconscious, Father No use for you Timeen was up He was buying the drink "

"Drink?" asked the Scots girl grinning hopefully

"For the wake," explained the Celt

"Well, do you know what it is, by Harry?" cried the inspector earnestly to them all "He's making a great fight for it "

"He may as well go now and be done with it," said Dinny "Gimme the rod, Dinny, gimme the rod," screamed the child and taking it he dashed off like a lancer, shouting with joy Dinny lumbered after him with the saucepan

"I reckon these people are pretty heartless?" suggested the soldier

"We Irish," explained the Celt, "are indifferent to the affairs of the body We are a spiritual people "

"What enchanting nonsense," laughed the young woman and threw back her whiskey delightedly

"It is none the less true," reprimanded the Celt

"You make me feel so old," sighed the young woman, "so old and so wise "

"Are you a Catholic?" asked the Celt suspiciously

"Yes, but what on earth has that to do with anything?"

"Well, I reckon I don't know much about the spirit, but you may be right about the body Did you see those hens' guts?"

The priest intervened diplomatically

"Did you ever see them fishing for eels? It's great fun Come and watch them "

All but the tramp walked idly to the edge of the lake The waves were beating in among the stones, pushing a little wrack of straw and broken reeds before them Dinny had stuck a long string of windpipe to the hook and the boy had slung it out about twelve feet from the shore To lure the eels a few random bits of guts had been thrown into the brown shallows

at their feet and there swayed like seaweed The group peered Nothing happened Suddenly Dinny shouted as fast as a machine-gun's burst

"Look at 'em look at 'em look at the devils blosht it look at 'em look at 'em "

A string of intestines was streaking away out into the lake Dark serpentine shapes whirled snakily in and out of the brown water The eels had smelled the rank bait and were converging on it

"By golly," cried the American, "they must smell that bait a mile away "

The reel whirled, the line flew, the rod bent, they all began to shout, the child trembled with excitement

"You have him pull him you divil," roared Dinny and seized the rod and whirled a long white belly in over their dodging heads The girl gave a cry of disgust as the five men leaped on the eel, now lashing in the dust, and hammered savagely at it with heels, stones, a stick, screaming, laughing, shoving The eel seemed immortal Though filthy and bleeding it squirmed galvanically The child circled dancing around the struggling group, half-delighted, half-terrified

"Well, Jo," said the young woman as she looked disdainfully at the last wriggles of the corpse, "it seems that boys will be boys Dinny, do you really eat eels?"

"Christ, gurl I wouldn't touch one of 'em for a hundred pounds "

"Then why catch them?"

"For fun "

Her face gathered, ceased to be The Laughing Cavalier and became Beethoven in Labour She saw that the men had now become absorbed entirely in the sport The American had thrown out the line again and they were all peering excitedly into the water The sun left the last tips of the mountains The lake grew sullen Its waves still hissed They did not weary of the game until eight eels lay writhing in the dust

Just as they were becoming bored they observed a silent countryman at the edge of the ring looking down at the eels The priest spoke to him, saying, "Well, Timeen, how is he?" He was a lithe, lean, hollow-cheeked young man with his cap pulled low over his eyes He lifted his face and they saw that he was weeping

"He's gone, Father," he said in a low voice

"The Lord have mercy on him," said the priest and his own eyes filled and the others murmured the prayer after him "The poor old cobbler I must go and see herself "

He hastened away and presently, tidy and brushed and in his Roman collar, they saw him cycle down the road The child called after him, "Will you roast the eels for me tonight?" and over his shoulder the priest called, "I will, Jo, after supper," and disappeared wobblingly over the first hill

"By Harry," cried the inspector, "there'll be a powerful gathering of the clans to-night "

"How's that?" from the American

"For the wake," explained the Celt

"I'd certainly like to see a wake "

"You'll be very welcome, sur," said Timeen

"Did he go easy?" asked the inspector

Dinny threw the guts into the lake, and took Timeen by the arm

"He went out like a candle," said Timeen, and let Dinny lead him away gently to some private part of the house

The group dissolved

"I do wish," said the American, "they wouldn't throw guts into the lake After all we swim in it "

"It's very unsanitary all right," the inspector agreed

"What are we all," said the Celt philosophically, "but a perambulating parcel of guts "

The girl sighed heavily and said, "The lamp is lighting "

In the hotel window the round globe of the lamp was like a full moon A blue haze had gathered over everything They strolled back to the bar for a last drink, the child staggering after them with the heavy saucepan of dead eels

The cobbler's cottage was on the brow of a hill about a mile down the road It was naked, slated, whitewashed, two-storied It had a sunken haggard in front and a few fuchsias and hollies behind it, blown almost horizontally by the storms On three sides lay an expanse of moor, now softened by the haze of evening From his front door the dead cobbler used to look across this barren moor at the jagged mountain-range, but he could also see where the valley opened out and faded into the tentative and varying horizons of forty miles away

When the priest entered the kitchen the wife was alone—the news had not yet travelled She was a tiny, aged woman who looked as if her whole body from scalp to soles was wrinkled and yellow, her face, her bare arms, her bare chest were as golden as a dried apple, even her eyeballs seemed wrinkled But her white hair flowed upward all about her like a Fury in magnificent wild snakes from under an old fisherman's tweed hat, and her mobile mouth and her loud—too loud—voice gave out a tremendous vitality When she was a young girl she must have been as lively as a minnow in a mountain-stream The priest had known her for most of his adult life as a woman whose ribald tongue had made the neighbours delight in her and fear her he was stirred to tears to find her looking up at him now like a child who has been beaten She was seated on the long settle underneath the red lamp before the picture of the Sacred Heart

He sat beside her and took her hand

"Can I go up and pray for him?"

"Katey Dan is readying him," she whispered, and the priest became aware of footsteps moving in the room over their heads

She lumbered up the ladder-like stairs to see if everything was ready While he waited he looked at the cobbler's tools by the window—the last,

and the worn hammer, and the old butter-box by the fire where the cobbler used to sit. Everything in the kitchen had the same worn look of time and use, and everything was dusted with the grey dust of turf—the kettle over the peat fire, the varied pot-hooks on the crane, the bright metal of the tongs, the dresser with its pieces of delft, a scalded churn-lid leaning in the window to dry. There was nothing there that was not necessary, unless, perhaps, the red lamp and the oleograph of the Sacred Heart, and even that had the stiff and frozen prescription of an ikon. The only unusual thing was two plates on the table under the window, one of snuff and one of shredded tobacco for the visitors who would soon be coming down from every corner of the glens. The only light in the cottage came from the turf-fire.

As he sat and looked at the blue smoke curling up against the brown soot of the chimney's maw he became aware, for the first time in his life, of the silence of this moor. He heard the hollow feet above the rafters. A cricket chirruped somewhere behind the fire. Always up to now he had thought of this cottage as a place full of the cobbler's satirical talk, his wife's echoes and contradictions. Somebody had once told the old man that he was not only the valley's storyteller but its "gossip-columnist"; the old chap had cocked a suspicious eye, too vain to admit that he did not know the phrase, and skated off into one of his yarns about the days when he had cobbled for the Irish workers laying rails out of Glasgow along the Clyde. The priest smiled at the incident. Then he frowned as he looked at the fire, a quiet disintegration—a turf-fire never emits even the slightest whisper. He realized that this cottage would be completely silent from now on. Although it was May he had a sudden poignant sensation of autumn, why he could not tell.

The old woman called him up. After the dusk of the kitchen this upper room was brilliant. She had lighted five wax-candles about her husband's head. Snowy sheets made a canopy about his face. The neighbour-woman had just finished the last delicately fluted fold on the lacey counterpane that lay ridged over the stomach and toes. Silently the three knelt and prayed.

When they rose the old woman said looking down at the calm countenance on the pillow:

"He's a fine corse and a heavy corse."

"He was a great man. I loved him."

"He had a fierce veneration for you, Father."

They lumbered down the steep stairs. She was as quiet as if the business in hand was something that had happened outside the course of nature. She thanked God for the fine weather. She asked him were there many staying at the hotel. When he told her, she muttered, "We must be satisfied," as if she were talking about the hotel and not about her man. When two more neighbour women came and stood looking at them from the doorway, he took leave of her saying that he would return later in the night.

The hollies at the door were rubbing squeakingly against each other.

The moon was rising serenely over the Pass to the East. He felt the cold wind as he rode back to the lake.

They were at supper when he entered the hotel. He joined them about the round table in the bay window through which he could barely discern the stars above the mountains. The rest of the long room, beyond the globe of the lamp, was in shadow. He mentioned that he had seen the cobbler, that they must go down later to the wake, and then set about his food. He paid small heed to the conversation although he gathered that they were loud in discussion over the delay in serving supper.

"Just the same," the American was saying, "I cannot see why it would not be perfectly simple to hang up a card on the wall announcing meal-times. Breakfast, eight to ten. Luncheon, one to three. And so on. It's quite simple."

"Just as they do," suggested the young Scotswoman, "in the Regent Palace Hotel?"

"Exactly," he agreed, and then looked in puzzlement at her because she was giggling happily to herself.

"You must admit," the inspector assured her, following his usual role of trying to agree with everybody, "that they have a wonderful opportunity here if they only availed of it. Why don't they cater more for the wealthy clientele? I mean, now, suppose they advertised Special Duck Dinners, think of the crowds that would come motoring out of Cork for them on summer afternoons. It's only about forty miles, a nice run."

"Gee, how often have I driven forty miles and more for a barbecue supper down the coast? I can see those lobster suppers at Cohasset, now, two dollars fifty, and the rows and rows of automobiles line outside on the concrete."

"What does our Celt say to this perfectly hideous picture?" asked the redmop.

"I can see no objection—provided the language spoken is Gaelic."

She broke into peals of laughter.

"We," the Celt went on, dark with anger, "envisage an Ireland both modern and progressive. Christianity," he went on, proud both of the rightness and intellectual tolerance of his argument, "is not opposed to modernity, or to comfort, or to culture. I should not mind," his voice was savage, for she was chuckling like a zany, "if seaplanes landed on that lake outside. Why should I? All this admiration for backwardness and inefficiency is merely so much romantic nonsense. Ireland has had enough of it."

She groaned comically.

"Fascist type. Definitely schizoid. Slight sadistic tendency. Would probably be Socialist in Britain, if not—" she wagged her flaming head warningly and made eyes of mock horror—"dare I say it, C P?"

"You," cried the Celt scornfully, "merely like the primitive so long as it is not in your own country. Let's go to Nigeria and love the simple ways of the niggers. Let's holiday in Ireland among the beautiful peasants. Imperialist!"

"I beg your pardon," she cried, quite offended "I am just as happy in the Shetlands or the Hebrides as I am here Britain's pockets of primitiveness are her salvation If she ever loses them she's doomed I very much fear she's doomed already with all these moth-eaten church-wardens in Parliament trying to tidy us up!"

And she drew out her cigar-case and pulling her coffee towards her lit a long Panatella As she puffed she was sullen and unbeautiful again as if his hate had quenched her loveliness as well as her humour

"Well, now, now, after all," soothed the inspector, "it's all very well for you Your country is a great country with all the most modern conveniences "

"Heaven help it!"

" whereas we have a long leeway to make up Now, to take even a small thing Those guts in the lake "

"O God!" she groaned "What a fuss you make over one poor little chicken's guts! Damn it, it's all phosphates The Chinese use human phosphates for manure "

The priest shook in his fat with laughter—it was a joke exactly to his liking—but the other three took the discussion from her and she smoked in dudgeon until the priest too was pulling his pipe and telling her about the dead cobbler, and how every night in winter his cottage used to be full of men coming to hear his views on Hitler and Mussolini and the Prophecies of Saint Columcille which foretold that the last battle of the last world-war would be fought at Ballylickey Bridge The others began to listen as he retold some of the cobbler's more earthy stories that were as innocent and sweaty as any Norse or Celtic yarn of the Golden Age such as the dilemma of the sow eating the eel which slipped out of her as fast as it went into her until, at last, the sow shouted in a fury "I'll settle you, you slippery devil!" and at one and the same moment snapped up the eel and clapped her backside to the wall

Laughing they rose and wandered, as usual into the kitchen for the night They expected to find it empty, thinking that everybody would be going down to the wakehouse, instead it was more crowded than ever, it had become a sort of clearing-house where the people called on their way to and from the cobbler's cottage, either too shy to go there directly or unwilling to go home after visiting their old friend

The small boy was eagerly awaiting them with the sauce-pan of eels The priest set to He took off his clerical jacket and put on a green wind-jammer, whose brevity put an equator around his enormous paunch, so that when he stooped over the fire he looked like one of those global toys that one cannot knock over When the resinous fir-stumps on the great flat hearth flamed up—the only light in the kitchen—he swelled up, shadows and all, like a necromancer He put an eel down on the stone floor and with his penknife slit it to its tail and gutted it The offal glistened oilily While he was cutting the eel its tail had slowly wound about his wrist, and when he tied its nose to a pothook and dangled it over a leaning flame and its oil began to drip and sizzle in the blaze the eel again slowly curved as if in agony The visitors amused themselves by making sarcastic

comments on the priest as cook, but four countrymen who lined the settle in the darkness with their caps on and their hands in their pockets watched him, perfectly immobile, not speaking, apparently not interested

"Aha, you divil, you," taunted the priest, "now will you squirm? If the cobbler's sow was here now she would make short work of you!"

That was the only time any of the countrymen spoke from the darkness of a far corner an old man said

"I wondher is the cobbler telling that story to Hitler now?"

"I sincerely hope," said the Scots girl, "that they're not in the same place"

The old man said

"God is good I heard a priesht say wan time that even Judas might be saved"

"Jo," said the inspector, steering as usual into pleasant channels, "do you think that eel is alive?"

The small boy was too absorbed to heed, lost in his own delight

Now and again a handsome, dark serving-girl came to the fire to tend the pots or renew the sods, for meals were eaten in this house at all hours she seemed fascinated by the eel and every time she came she made disgusted noises The men loved these expressions of disgust and tried in various ways to provoke more of them, offering her a bite or holding up the entangled saucepan to her nose Once the American chased her laughingly with an eel in his fist and from the dark back-kitchen they could hear them scuffling playfully By this time many more neighbours had come into the kitchen and into the bar and into the second back-kitchen, and two more serving-girls became busy as drinks and teas and dishes of ham passed to and fro, so that the shadows of the men about the fire, the scurrying girls, the wandering neighbours fluttered continually on the white walls and the babble of voices clucked through the house like ducks clacking at a nightpond

Above this murmuring and clattering they heard the tramp singing in the bar a merry dancing tune, partly in Gaelic and partly in English

So little soldier of my heart  
Will you marry marry me now,  
With a heigh and a ho  
And a sound of drum now?

"So the little bastard does know Irish," cried the Celt much affronted as the song broke into Gaelic

A chailin og mo chroidhe  
Conus a phosfainn se thu  
Agus gan pioc de n bhrog do chur orm

"Perhaps he suits his language to his company?" the red-haired girl suggested

I went to the cobbler  
The besht in the town  
For a fine pair of shoes



For my soldiëreen brown  
 So o o  
 Little soldier of my heart,  
 Will you marry, marry me now

The girl peered around the jamb of the door into the bar and then scurried back dismayed. The tramp had spotted her and at once came dancing fantastically into the kitchen on her heels. His long mackintosh tails leaped, and their shadows with them. His black beard flowed left and right as his head swayed to the tune and his black locks swung with it. His hands expressively flicked left and right as he capered about the girl. His billycock hat hopped.

But O girl of my heart  
 How could I marry you  
 And I without a shirt  
 Either white or blue?

"Would you ate an eel?" asked the greenjacketed porpoise by the fire holding up the shrivelled carcase to the dancer, who at once gaily doffed his hat (into which the priest dropped the eel) and went on his way back to the bar dancing and singing, followed in delight by the boy.

So chuadhas dtí an tailleur  
 The besht to be found  
 And I bought a silken shirt  
 For my saighdiurín donn

"Come, lad," cried the priest, suddenly serious, 'it's time for us to visit the cobbler."

It was full moonlight. The lake crawled livingly under it. The mountains were like the mouth of hell. It seemed to the priest as if the dark would come down and claw at them. He said so to the Celt who had become wildly excited at the sight of the dark and the light and the creeping lake and strode down to the beach and threw up his arms crying,

"O Love! O Terror! O Death!"—and he broke into Balfe's song to the moon from *The Lily of Killarney*.

*The Moon hath raised her lamp above*

"If you don't stop that emotional ass," growled the girl as she wheeled out her bicycle, "he'll start singing *The Barcarolle*," and showed her own emotion by cycling madly away by herself.

"Grim! Grim!" said the American and the inspector agreed with, "In the winter! Ah! In the winter!"

They were cycling now in single file switchbacking up and down over the little hills until the glow of the cobbler's window eyed them from the dark. Near the cottage dark shapes of men and boys huddled under the hedges and near the walls and as they alighted drew aside to let them pass, fingers to caps for the priest. The causeway to the kitchen door was crowded, unexpectedly noisy with talk, smelling of turf-smoke and pipe-smoke and bogwater and sweat and hens.

In her corner by the enormous peat-fire, the little old woman seemed almost to be holding pleasant court, her spirits roused by the friendliness and excitement of the crowds of neighbours

The babble fell as the strangers entered. It rose again as they disappeared up the ladder-stairs to pay their respects to the cobbler. It sank again when they clambered down. Then gradually it rose and steadied as they settled into the company. They were handed whisky or stout or tea by Timeen and the priest began to chat pleasantly and unconcernedly with the nearest men to him. To the three Irishmen all this was so familiar that they made no wonder of it, and they left the American and the girl to the cobbler's wife who at once talked to them about America and Scotland with such a fantastic mixture of ignorance and personal knowledge—gleaned from years upon years of visitors—that all their embarrassment vanished in their pleasure at her wise and foolish talk.

Only twice did her thoughts stray upstairs. A neighbour lifted a red coal in the tongs to kindle his pipe; she glanced sharply and drew a sharp breath.

"Light away, Dan Frank," she encouraged then. "Lasht week my ould divil used to be ever reddenning his pipe, God rest him, although I used to be scolding him for burning his poor ould belly with all the shmoking."

Once when the babble suddenly fell into a trough of silence they heard a dog across the moor baying at the moon. She said,

"Times now I do be thinking that with the cobbler gone from me I'll be afraid to be by meself in the house with all the idle shtallions going the road."

It was her commonest word for men, shtalls or shtallions, and all the neighbours who heard her must have pictured a lone tramp or a tinker walking the mountain road, and she inside listening through the barred door to the passing feet.

Elsewhere she talked of things like hens and of prices and several times seemed to forget the nature of the occasion entirely. Then, in her most ribald vein she became scabrous in her comments on her visitors, to the delight of everybody except the victims, who could only scuttle red-faced out the door without, in respect for her, as much as the satisfaction of a curse. It was after one of these sallies that the priest decided to close his visit with a laughing command to them all to kneel for the Rosary. With a lot of scuffling they huddled over chairs or sank on one knee, hiding their faces reverently in their caps.

Only the soldier did not join them. He went out and found more men, all along the causeway and under the hedges, kneeling likewise, so that the mumbling litany of prayer mingled with the tireless baying of the dog. All about them the encircling jags of mountains were bright and jet, brilliant craters, quarries of blackness, gleaming rocks, grey undergrowth.

The journey back was even more eerie than the journey out, the moon now behind them, their shadows before, and as they climbed the hills the mountains climbed before them as if to bar their way and when they rushed downward to the leaden bowl that was the lake, and into the

closed gully of the coom, it was as if they were cycling not through space but through a maw of Time that would never move

The kitchen was empty The eels lay in the pot Two old boots lay on their sides drying before the fading fire The crickets whistled loudly in the crannies They took their candles and went in their stockinged feet up the stairs to bed, whispering

The morning was a blaze of heat The island was a floating red flower The rhododendrons around the edges of the island were replicated in the smooth lee-water which they barely touched As the American, the girl, and the Celt set off for their pre-breakfast swim from the island they heard the sounds of spades striking against gravel They saw the tall thin figure of an aged man, with grey side-chops, in a roundy black hat and a swallow-tailed coat, standing against the sky He held a piece of twig in his hand like a water-diviner He was measuring, taking bearings, solicitously encouraging the gravediggers below him to be accurate in their lines He greeted the strangers politely, but they could see that they were distracting him and that he was weighed down by the importance of his task

"For do you see, gentlemen, the cobbler was most particular about where he would be buried I had a long talk with him about it lasht week and the one thing he laid down was for him to be buried in the one line with all the Cronins from Baurlinn "

"But," demurred the American, "would a foot or two make all that difference?"

"It is an old graveyard," the old man admonished him solemnly, "and there are many laid here before him, and there will be many another after him "

They left him to his task The water was icy and they could only bear to dive in and clamber out To get warm again they had to race up and down the brief\*sward before they dressed, hooting with pleasure in the comfort of the sun, the blue sky, the smells of the island and the prospect of trout and bacon-and-eggs for breakfast As they stepped back on the mainland they met a mountany lad coming from the depths of the coom, carrying a weighted sack His grey tweed trousers were as dark with wetness to the hips as if he had jumped into a bog-hole He walked with them to the hotel and explained that he was wet from the dew on the mountain-heather and the young plantations He had just crossed from the next valley, about two hours away He halted and opened the mouth of the sack to show them, with a grin of satisfaction, the curved silver and blue of a salmon He said he would be content to sell it to the hotel for five shillings and they agreed heartily with him when he said, "Sure what is it only a night's sport and a walk over the mountain?" Over breakfast they upbraided one another for their lie-abled laziness on such a glorious day

The day continued summer-hot burning itself away past high noon The inspector got his car and drove away to visit some distant school The American took his rod and rowed out of sight to the head of the lake The girl walked away alone The Celt went fishing from the far shore The priest sat on the garden-seat before the hotel and read his

Office and put a handkerchief over his head and dozed, and when the postman came took the morning paper from him. Once a farm-cart made a crockety-clock down the eastern road and he wondered if it was bringing the coffin. In the farmyard behind the hotel the milk-separator whirled. For most of the time everything was still—the sparkling lake, the idle shore, the tiny fields, the sleeping hermit's island, the towering mountains, the flawless sky. "It is as still," thought the priest, "as the world before life began." All the hours that the priest sat there, or walked slowly up and down reading his breviary, or opened a lazy eye under his handkerchief, he saw only one sign of life—a woman came on top of a hillock across the lake, looked about her for man or animal and went back to her chores.

Towards two o'clock the red-headed girl returned from her walk and sat near him. She was too tired or lazy to talk, but she did ask after a time,

"Do you think they really believe that the cobbler is talking to Hitler?"

"They know no more about Hitler than they do about Cromwell. But I'm sure they believe that the cobbler is having nice little chats with his old pals Jerry Coakley and Shamus Cronin—that's Dinny's father that he will be lying next to—up there in the graveyard—in a half an hour's time."

She smiled happily.

"I wish I had their faith."

"If you were born here you would."

"I'd also have ten children," she laughed. "Will you join me in a drink?"

He could not because he must await the funeral and the local curate at the chapel on the island, and, rising, he went off there. She went alone into the bar and helped herself to a whisky, and leaned over the morning paper. She was joined presently by the Celt, radiant at having caught nothing. To pass the time she started a discussion about large families and the ethics of birth-control. He said that he believed that everybody "practised it in secret," a remark which put her into such good humour that, in gratitude, she made him happy by assuring him that in ten years' time the birth-rate in England would be the lowest in the world, and for the innocent joy he showed at this she glowed with so much good-feeling towards him that she told him also how hateful birth-control is to the poor in the East End of London.

"I always knew it," he cried joyfully. "Religion has nothing to do with these things. All that counts is the Natural Law. For, as I hope you do realize, there is a Law of Nature!"

And he filled out two more whiskies and settled down to the unburthening of his soul.

"You see, I'm not really an orthodox Catholic at all. To me Religion is valid only because and in so far as it is based on Nature. That is why Ireland has a great message for the world. Everywhere else but here civilization has taken the wrong turning. Here Nature still rules Man, and Man still obeys Nature."

"As in the East End?" she said.

He hurried on, frowning crossly

"I worship these mountains and these lakes and these simple Gaelic people because they alone still possess "

"But you were angry last night when I defended primitive life You wanted sea-planes on the lake and tourists from Manchester in Austin Sevens parked in front of "

"I have already explained to you," he reproved her, "that to be natural doesn't mean that we must be primitive! That's the romantic illusion What I mean to say is—that is in very simple words of course "

And his dark face buttoned up and he became ill disposed again as he laboured to resolve his own contradictions

She was about to fly from him when, through the wide-open door, she saw a dark group top the hillock to the east As the sky stirred between their limbs she saw that they were a silhouette of six men lumbering under a coffin Its brass plate caught the sun They were followed by a darker huddle of women After these came more men, and then a double file of horsemen descended out of the blue sky On the hermit's island some watcher began to toll a bell

"I'm going to the island," she said He followed her, nattering about Darwin and Lamarck

The priest stood under the barrel-arch of the little Romanesque chapel, distant in his white surplice, impressive, a magician The two went shyly among the trees and watched the procession dissolving by the lakeside The priest went out to meet the local curate

Presently the coffin lumbered forward towards the chapel on the six shoulders and was laid rockingly on four chairs The crowd seeped in among the trees The widow sat in the centre of the chapel steps, flanked on each side by three women She was the only one who spoke and it was plain from the way her attendants covered their faces with their hands that she was being ribald about each new arrival, the men knew it too, for as each one came forward on the sward, to meet the judgment of her dancing, wicked eyes, he skipped hastily into the undergrowth, with a wink or a grin at his neighbours There was now a prolonged delay The men looked around at the weather, or across the lake at the crops Some turned their heads where, far up the lake, the American in his boat was rhythmically casting his invisible line Then the two priests returned and entered the chapel Their voices mumbling the *De Profundis* was like the buzzing of bees The men bowed their heads, as usual holding their caps before their faces Silence fell again as the procession reformed

In the graveyard the familiar voices of the men lowering the dead into the earth outraged the silence Nobody else made a sound until the first shovel of earth struck the brass-plate on the lid and then the widow, defeated at last, cried out without restraint As the earth began to fall more softly her wailing became more quiet The last act of the burial was when the tall man, the cobbler's friend, smoothened the last dust of earth with his palms as if he were smoothening a blanket over a child The priest said three Aves They all responded hollowly

They dispersed slowly, as if loath to admit that something final had

happened to them all As each one went down to the path he could see the fisherman far away, steadily flogging the water But they did not go home They hung around the hotel all the afternoon, the men in the crowded bar, drinking, the women clucking in the back-kitchens Outside the hotel the heads of the patient horses, growing fewer as the hours went by, drooped lower and lower with the going down of the sun, until only one cart was left and that, at last, ambled slowly away

It was twilight before the visitors, tired and not in a good temper—they had only been given tea and boiled eggs for lunch—could take possession of the littered bar They helped themselves to drinks and threw the coins into the pint-glass Drinking they looked out at the amber light touching the mountain line

"It's queer," murmured the priest "Why is it, all to-day and yesterday, I keep on thinking it's the autumn?"

"'Tis a bit like it all right," the inspector agreed pleasantly

"Nonsense," said the red-haired girl "It's a beautiful May day "

"Thanks be to God," agreed the inspector

A frieze of small black cows passed, one by one, along the beach They watched them go Then Dinny put his head in from the kitchen

"Supper, gentlemen "

"I hope we'll have that salmon that came over the mountains," smiled the Celt

Nobody stirred

"In America, you know, we call it the Fall "

"The Fall?" said the priest

"The fall of the leaves," explained the soldier, thinking he did not understand

The priest looked out over the dark lake—a stranger would hardly have known there was a lake if it had not been for the dun edge of froth—and, jutting out his lower lip, nodded to himself, very slowly, three times

"Yes, indeed," the inspector sighed, watching his face sympathetically

"Aye," murmured the priest, and looked at him, and nodded again, knowing that this was a man who understood

Then he whirled, gave the Celt a mighty slap on the back, and cried, "Come on and we'll polish off that salmon Quick march!"

They finished their drinks and strolled into the lamplit dining-room As they sat around the table and shook out their napkins the soldier said, "I reckon to-morrow will be another fine day "

The red-haired girl leaned to the window and shaded her eyes against the pane She could see how the moon touched the trees on the island with a ghostly tenderness One clear star above the mountain wall gleamed Seeing it her eyebrows floated upward softly for sheer joy

"Yes," she said quietly "It will be another grand day—tomorrow "

And her eyebrows sank, very slowly, like a falling curtain

Julian's father and mother lived in a castle on a hillside in the deep woods. At the four corners were pointed towers roofed with lead, the walls sprang from shafts of living rock which sloped steeply to the moat's bottom. The flagstones in the courtyard were tidy as a church floor, long spouts, representing dragons with their jaws wide, spat rainwater into cisterns, and at every window on every floor bloomed basil or heliotrope in painted pots.

Outside the castle was a second enclosure fenced in with stakes and containing first an orchard, then a flower garden of intricately patterned beds, then an arbor with many bowers where you sat to take the air, finally a playing field for the sport-loving pages. At the far side of the castle were kennels, stables and barns, a bakehouse and a winepress. Beyond lay green-turfed pastures, enclosed in turn by a stout hedge of thorn.

The castle had long been at peace with the world and the portcullis was never lowered now, grass grew in the moat, and swallows nested in the rotting battlements. If there was too much sun the Bowman who paced the rampart all day long would retire into his sentry-house and sleep like a monk.

There was a gleam of polished metals in the great rooms, walls were hung with tapestries against the cold, cupboards bulged with linen, cellars with wine casks, coffers with bags of gold and silver coin. In the armory, among captive banners and the heads of hunted beasts, were weapons of every age and nation, from slings of the Amalekites and javelins of the Garamantes, to Saracen swords and Norman coats of mail. The great spit in the kitchen could roast an ox whole, the chapel was as splendid as a king's oratory. In a secluded corner there was even a Roman bath, although the old lord thought it a heathen device and abstained from putting it to use.

Wrapped always in a foxskin cape, he wandered about the castle, administering justice to his vassals and settling disputes among his neighbors. In winter he studied the flying snowflakes or had stories read to him. With the first fine days he rode out on his mule along country roads through fields of greening wheat, stopping every now and then to chat with the serfs and give them advice. He had many light loves, then at last took to wife a woman of the highest birth.

Pale, serious, a little proud, she wore headdresses which brushed the tops of doors and her train trailed three paces behind her. She ran her household as if it were a convent. Every morning she set the servants to their tasks, supervised the making of unguents and preserves, then turned to spinning or to embroidering altar cloths. She prayed God for a son and a son was born to her.

There was great rejoicing then. There was a feast that went on for three days and four nights while torches flared and harps sounded and the strewn greens wilted underfoot. Rare spices were eaten and fowls the size of sheep, and a dwarf entertained by emerging unexpectedly from a pie. The crowd swelled so from hour to hour that the supply of wine cups gave out at last and men took to swilling from helmets and hunting horns.

The young mother shunned the festivities, keeping quietly to her bed. One night she came suddenly awake and made out a sort of shadow in vague motion beneath her moon-streaked window. It was an old man in monk's cloth, he had a rosary at his side and a sack on his shoulder and the look and bearing of a hermit. He came toward her where she lay, and while his lips did not move, a voice spoke distinctly through them. "Be glad," it said, "be glad, O mother, for this son of yours will be a saint."

She would have cried out, but the old man rose softly into the air and glided off and out of sight along a streak of moonlight. Now the banqueters' voices grew loud in song. She heard angels' voices, and her head fell back upon the pillow, above which hung some great martyr's bone in a jeweled frame.

Next morning she questioned the servants, who denied having seen any hermit. What she herself had seen and heard then was surely a message from heaven whether it had happened in reality or in a dream. But she was careful not to speak of it for fear she should be accused of presumption.

The guests went off at daybreak and Julian's father had just seen the last of them out and was standing by the gate alone when someone emerged suddenly from the morning mist—a man with the braided beard and silver finery and intense dark stare of a gypsy. He began to speak, to stammer crazily, as if he were possessed. "Your son, your son!" he cried, and went on to speak of someone "winning a lot of glory and shedding a lot of blood," and he ended by hailing Julian's parents as "the blest family of an emperor." The excited lord tossed him a purse full of coins. The man stooped to retrieve it, the high grass covered him, and he was gone. Looking this way and that the old lord called and called again. No answer! The wind was loud, the mists of morning blew away.

He blamed the vision on his exhausted state. He had been too long without sleep. "I shall be laughed at if I speak of it," he thought but the glory promised to his son continued to excite him even though he was unsure that he had heard the prophecy aright or that he had heard anything at all.

Husband and wife kept their secrets from each other but loved their son equally and made much of him and were intensely careful of his person because they believed him to be chosen by God. He lay in his



down-stuffed cradle, a dove-shaped lamp burning always just above, three nurses kept the cradle in motion, and with his blue eyes and rosy cheeks, his heavy swaddling, his embroidered gown and pearl-sewn cap, he did really resemble an infant Jesus. He cut all his teeth without crying.

When he was seven his mother taught him to sing and his father put him astride a huge battle horse to make him brave. The boy smiled with pleasure and soon was expert in the lore of battle horses. Meanwhile a learned old monk taught him Holy Writ, the Arabic numerals, the Latin alphabet and how to make dainty pictures on vellum. They worked together in a tower room high above the uproar of the castle, and when the lesson was over they came down into the garden to stroll and pause, studying the flowers.

Sometimes a train of pack animals was seen advancing through the valley below, driven by a man dressed like an Oriental. The lord, knowing the driver for a merchant, would send a servant after him, and the driver, confident of not being robbed, would consent to turn out of his road and be conducted into the great hall where he would throw open his trunks and hand around the many treasures within: the silks and velvets and perfumes and jewels, the various curios and inventions whose use was unknown in those parts. Finally he would be off, greatly enriched and quite unharmed. Or some pilgrim band would come knocking at the gate and when they had been fed and their wet clothes hung steamingly by the fire they would recount the story of their travels: the errant rocking voyages by sea, the long marches over hot sands, the fury of the paynims, the Syrian caves, the Manger and the Sepulcher. Before leaving they would present the young lord with seashells such as they wore sewed to their coats in token of their travels.

There were days when the lord feasted his old companions-at-arms. They drank and talked, recalling old engagements: the fortresses stormed, the rams and catapults making their din, the terrible wounds. Julian shouted as he listened and his father was now convinced that some day he would be a conqueror. But then evening came, and seeing the noble modesty with which, after prayers, he went among the kneeling poor to distribute alms, his mother decided that he was a future archbishop.

His place in chapel was next to his parents and even when the services were very protracted he stayed quietly on his knees with hands clasped firmly and his cap beside him on the floor. One day during Mass he looked up and saw a small white mouse creep from a hole in the wall, travel the length of the first altar step, explore about uncertainly, then trot back to its hole. Thinking to see the mouse again next Sunday, he felt strangely anxious. He did see it: the mouse reappeared, and each Sunday thereafter he watched for it, more and more anxious, hating the creature, intent on destroying it. So one Sunday after Mass he closed the door and strewed crumbs along the altar steps and stood waiting by the hole, armed with a stick. Long minutes passed, a small pink snout appeared, at last the entire mouse. He struck lightly, then stood amazed when the small body no longer moved. On the floor was a single drop of blood. Hastily Julian

wiped it up with his sleeve, and tossed the dead mouse outside, saying nothing to anyone

So many small birds pecked at the seeds in the garden that he thought of making a weapon out of a hollow reed filled with dried peas. When he came upon some tree that was noisy with birds, he approached it quietly, leveled his shooter, and blew out his cheeks. Birds came raining down in such abundance that he laughed aloud, pleased with his cleverness. As he was returning one morning along the rampart he spied a fat pigeon taking the sun there. He stopped to look at it, and as the wall was breached at this point and loose stones lay at hand, he grabbed one and swung and the bird dropped heavily into the moat.

He raced down after it, tearing his flesh on the brambles, searching wildly, as keen on the hunt as a young dog. The pigeon hung quivering in a bush with its wings broken. Its obstinate life filled him with rage. He took its throat in his hands and squeezed, the bird's struggles made his heart pound and his loins crawl with a strange lust and when it finally stiffened he was close to fainting.

At supper that night his father announced that the boy was old enough to learn to hunt. He got out an ancient book treating of the art of venery, written in the form of questions and answers exchanged between some master hunter and a pupil. It told how to train dogs and falcons, set traps, know a stag by its droppings, a fox by its tracks, a wolf by its lair, how best to start and track animals, where they are apt to take cover, which winds are most favorable, what cries to employ in the chase and what rules govern the division of the quarry. When Julian was able to repeat all this by heart his father made him a present of a magnificent pack of hunting dogs. There were twenty-four Barbary greyhounds, faster than gazelles but terribly wild and apt to get out of hand. There were seventeen pairs of loud-baying deep-chested white-and-russet Breton dogs, which looked wild but were easily controlled. For hunting wild boar with their ugly tactic of doubling back on the hunter, there were forty great shaggy boarhounds, and for bison hunting there were Tartary mastiffs which stood almost as tall as a jackass. Spaniels' black coats shone like satin, beagles sang out and setters yapped in chorus. In a yard by themselves were eight growling, eye-rolling, chain-rattling bulldogs—terrible beasts that leap at men's throats and are quite unafraid of lions.

Every dog in the pack ate white bread, drank from troughs of hewn stone, and answered to some high-sounding name.

At that the dogs were probably inferior to the falcons. Spending money freely, the old lord acquired tiercelets from the Caucasus, sakers from Babylonia, gerfalcons from Germany, he had the kind of pilgrim-hawks which are only captured along the high shores of cold seas in far parts of the world. A special shed housed all the birds, there they were chained along a perch according to size, and led out every so often to stretch and play on their own strip of turf. In the shops of the castle men were busy making purse-nets, hooks, traps and snares of all kinds.

Julian's family sometimes got up large parties to go quail hunting in

the fields. There the bird dogs soon began to point, then crouched motionless while the runners-in advanced with care and spread an immense net over and around them. A word from the huntsmen and the dogs barked, the quail took wing, and the ladies of the neighborhood with their husbands, children and maidservants, dashed for the net and captured the birds with ease. Or hares were started by beating on drums or foxes tumbled into pits or wolves thrust unsuspecting paws into cruel traps.

But Julian scorned these easy contrivances, preferring to hunt alone with horse and hawk. The hawk was usually a great white Scythian tararet, which perched firmly on his master's arm while they covered the plain at a gallop, a plume nodding on its leather hood and golden bells tinkling around its blue claws. When Julian loosed the jesses, letting him go, the wonderful bird shot arrow-like into the sky. Julian saw two dark specks circle and meet and vanish into the blue altitudes, then the falcon would drop dizzily from the skies, tearing at some bird in his claws, and resume his perch on the gauntlet with shaking wings. So Julian hunted heron, kites, crows and vultures.

He loved also to sound his horn and follow the dogs as they raced down the hills and jumped the streams and climbed to the next woods, and when a stag fell among them, moaning as they attacked it with their teeth, he skillfully dispatched it, then looked on with pleasure while they tore and devoured the bloody carcass.

On foggy days he hid out in the marshes to watch for geese, otter or wild duck. Three of his squires would have been waiting for him on the steps since daybreak, and even though the old monk his teacher made admonitory signs at him from his high window, Julian refused to look back. He went out in rain or storm or broiling sun, drank with his cupped hand from springs, ate wild apples as he went, snatched brief naps under trees, and reached home at midnight with burrs in his hair, mud and gore on his clothes, and the smell of game all over him. Gradually he came to resemble the wild things he hunted. He was indifferent to his mother's entreaties, cold to her kisses, and seemed to be caught in the dark toils of a dream.

He killed bears with a knife, bulls with a hatchet and wild boars with a spear. And once, with nothing but a stick, he kept off a lot of wolves which were feeding on the corpses around a gallows.

There came a winter morning when he set out before daybreak, thoroughly equipped, with his bow astride his shoulder and his quiver slung to his pommel. A couple of terriers trailed his Danish hunter, all three of them keeping step and pounding the ground in unison while the wind blew and frost collected on his coat. Toward the east the sky began to clear and in the pallid light he saw a multitude of rabbits leaping and running among their burrows. Immediately the dogs were among them, upon them, cracking their frail spines. Next he was in a stretch of woods and, spying a woodcock that perched as if frozen to a branch, with head under wing, he made at it with a backstroke of his sword and severed its two feet from its body and was off without stopping to retrieve it.

Three hours more and he was cresting a mountain so immensely high

that the heavens hung blue-black around him, and there in front of him was an expanse of flat rock with a precipice beyond and a couple of wild goats standing far out on it gazing idly into the gulf. Having no arrows—he had left his horse behind—he decided to fall directly upon them, and so, barefoot, bent double, dagger in hand, he advanced painfully towards them and brought the near one down with a sudden thrust in the ribs. The other, in a panic, leaped towards the void and Julian was after it to strike it down in turn when he stumbled and fell headlong across the body of the dead goat and there he lay, arms flung wide, staring down into space.

Then he was on the flats once more, following a willow-bordered stream, and a great number of cranes were in low shuttling flight above his head. Julian cut them all down, one by one, with his whip.

Meanwhile the day grew warmer, the frost melted and the sun broke through the haze. He now saw far off, lead-gray and gleaming, a small lake, and breasting its bright still surface was some unknown beaver-like animal. Across the distance he let fly an arrow and saw the creature sink and was sorry because he could not bring home the skin.

Now he was in an avenue of great trees, and passing under them as under some triumphal arch he entered a forest that lay beyond. A deer suddenly broke cover there, a buck showed in a side road, a badger came out of a hole, a peacock spread his tail along the grass, and when he had slain them all, there suddenly was another deer, more bucks and badgers sprang up around him, more peacocks and jays and blackbirds and foxes and porcupines and polecats and lynxes—an infinity of beasts, increasing as he advanced.

They crowded round him, trembling, with eyes of mild entreaty. But Julian attacked them tirelessly, having no thought except to be upon them with arrow or sword or knife. There was only the brute fact of his existence to remind him that he had been hunting for incalculable hours in some vague country where things happened with the same ease as in our dreams.

Then he saw an astonishing thing that made him pause at last. There opened before him a steep-sided sandy-bottomed valley, a sort of natural coliseum, and it was full of stags, an army of them, which huddled close and breathed warmth on one another, the steamy cloud from a hundred nostrils rising to mingle with the morning haze. For a moment, the prospect of so much slaughter made Julian go faint with excitement, then, springing from his horse, he thrust back his sleeves and began to take aim. With the twang of the first arrow all the stags looked up as one, a diffused moan broke from them, fissures opened in their solid ranks and panic shook the whole herd. As Julian's arrows fell upon them, hemmed in as they were by the valley walls, the herd stampeded. Stags reared, pawed, locked antlers, climbed heavily on each other. And all the while they fell, bodies and antlers piling up into one vast inextricable ever-growing ever-shifting mound. So one by one, with heaving lungs and bursting bowels, they died along the sands and soon everything was still and night came down and the tree-screened sky was the color of blood.

Julian leaned against a tree and stared on the enormous massacre,

trying to remember how it had been done Then across the valley at the woods edge he saw another stag with its hind and fawn Dark, enormous, the stag had a white beard and an intricate many-pointed growth of horn, the hind, pale as a dead leaf, grazed idly by while her spotted fawn trotted alongside, pulling at her dugs Again Julian's bow sang out The fawn dropped The mother, looking up, uttered a single shattering all but human cry Julian, tense, exasperated, brought her down as well, with a shot full in the breast Seeing her fall the great stag leaped and received Julian's arrow, his last one, between the eyes There it stuck fast but the stag, indifferent, came striding over the bodies of his dead, came on and on, while Julian retreated in horror, seeing himself charged and laid flat and disemboweled Then the great stag halted and with burning eyes, solemn, accusing, like some patriarch or judge, he spoke, while off in the distance a bell tolled

"Accurst! accurst! accurst! one day, O savage heart, you will destroy your father and mother "

The stag dropped quietly to earth and closed his eyes and died

Julian stood as if stunned, then a weariness swept over him, followed by great waves of disgust and sadness His horse was lost, his dogs had taken to their heels, the solitude around him seemed full of vague alarms He fled, striking across country, following a trail at random And there, suddenly, was the castle gate

That night he did not sleep but lay staring into the uneven light of the hanging lamp and saw always the great black, bearded wide-antlered stag The stag's words obsessed him, repeatedly he denied them "It cannot be that I should kill them No, no! I have no wish to kill them " Then in a moment he thought, "But suppose I *should* wish—" And he lay and trembled for fear the Devil should implant that unspeakable wish in him

Three months his mother prayed in anguish by his bed while his father, groaning, paced the corridors Specialists were brought in, famous doctors and apothecaries, they said he was sick with a miasma or with carnal desire, they prescribed drugs and more drugs When they questioned him, however, Julian merely shook his head

Growing stronger, he walked briefly in the courtyard, leaning on his father and the old monk When he had quite recovered he obstinately refused to hunt again His father, hoping to bring him around, made him a present of a fine stout Saracen sword It hung aloft on a pillar among other arms and trophies, and Julian had to mount a ladder to bring it down It was very heavy and slipped from his hands and, clattering down, grazed the old lord's shoulder and slashed his mantle Julian fainted, thinking he had killed his father

From then on he felt a horror of weapons and went white at the sight of a bare blade This weakness grieved his family and at last the old monk, in the name of God, honor, and the ancestral dead, bade him take up again the exercises of a gentleman

The squires amused themselves by practicing daily with javelins Julian soon excelled at this sport and could drive his javelin into a bottle's mouth

or strike the tail-feathers from a weathercock or pick out doornails at a hundred paces

One summer evening he loitered in the arbor, now dim in the failing light, and spying beyond the arbor, against a wall, what he thought to be two white fluttering wings, surely a stork, he hurled his javelin. There was a terrible cry, it was the voice of his mother, whose bonnet with its long white fluttering ribbons stayed pinned to the wall.

Julian fled the castle and was seen there no more

## II

He fell in with a passing troop of adventuring soldiers and came to know thirst, hunger, fever, and vermin, the noise of battle, the sight of dying men. His skin browned in the wind, his arms and legs grew hard under the weight of his armor, and being strong, fearless, just and shrewd, he was soon in command of a company.

With sword aloft he waved his men into battle, he scaled fortress walls by night, hanging to knotted ropes, tugged at by the wind, while sparks of Greek fire clung to his cuirass and boiling tar and molten lead poured hissing down from the battlements. Stones crashed on his buckler, shivering it, bridges overloaded with men gave way beneath him. On one occasion he felled fourteen men with a single swing of his battle-ax, in the lists he overcame all challengers, many times he was left on the field for dead.

Yet he always walked away, thanks to the divine favor which he enjoyed now, because he had become the protector of churchmen, orphans, widows and aged men. Of aged men most of all, and seeing some old stranger on the road ahead he would call out to him to show his face, as if afraid he might kill him in error.

Desperate men flocked to his banner, runaway slaves, serfs in revolt, bastards without fortune, and soon he had an army of his own, its fame increasing with its numbers, until the world sought him out and he was able to give aid by turns to the French Dauphin, the English king, the Templars of Jerusalem, the Surena of the Parthians, the Negus of Abyssinia, the Emperor of Calcutta. He did battle with Scandinavians in fish-scale armor, with Negroes astride red asses and brandishing shields of hippopotamus hide, with East Indians the color of pale gold who waved shining swords and wore their crowns into battle. He subdued the Troglodytes and the Anthropophages. He journeyed through hot countries where men's hair took fire from the sun and they flared up like torches, through cold countries where men's arms snapped freezing from their sockets and fell heavily to earth, through fog-bound countries where they marched among phantoms.

He was consulted by republics in distress, he conferred with ambassadors and obtained unexpected terms, he rebuked tyrants, delivered captive queens and set whole peoples free. It was Julian and no other who slew the Milanese serpent and the dragon of Oberburbach.

Now the Emperor of Occitania was victorious over the Spanish Moslems and took the Caliph of Cordova's sister as his concubine and by her had a daughter whom he brought up in the Christian faith. But the Caliph, feigning a desire to be converted, arrived with a numerous escort as if on a visit to the Emperor, put his entire garrison to the sword and threw him into a dungeon where he used him cruelly to extort his treasure.

Julian hastened to his aid, destroyed the infidel army, laid siege to the town, slew the Caliph, chopped off his head and tossed it over the ramparts like a ball. Then he released the Emperor and set him on his throne again in the presence of his entire court. By way of reward the Emperor offered him money, whole basketfuls, Julian would have none of it. Did he want more?—the Emperor offered him three-quarters of his wealth and was refused again, then half his kingdom, Julian thanked him and declined. The Emperor was in tears, he saw no way of showing his gratitude. At last he slapped his brow and turned whispering to one of his attendants, a curtain was drawn and there stood a young girl.

Her great dark eyes were like two soft lights and she had a charming smile. Her curls tangled with the jewels on her half-open bodice, through her transparent tunic shone the young lines of her body, which was plump, small, finely made.

Julian was dazzled, all the more because he had been chaste till now. So he took the Emperor's daughter in marriage, with a castle which she held from her mother and, the wedding over, quitted his host after an exchange of many courtesies.

Their palace was built of white marble in the Moorish style and stood on a promontory among orange groves. There was an expanse of bright bay below, a fanlike spread of forest behind, and terraces of flowers descending to a rosy beach where small shells crackled underfoot. The sky was an unchanging blue. Trees stirred in light winds that blew, now from off the sea, now down from the steep all-enveloping mountains.

The rooms were full of shadow yet drew soft light from encrusted walls. Tall reedlike columns supported domed vaults sculptured to represent stalactites in a cave. In the great halls were fountains, in the courts mosaics, on the walls festoons, delicate instances of architectural fancy abounded, and such was the silence everywhere that you could hear plainly the rustle of a scarf, the echo of a sigh.

Julian made war no longer but lived at ease among a tranquil people, contingents of them arriving daily to kneel before him and kiss his hand and do him homage like people of the East, while he lounged in purple dress in some deep-set window and called to mind the old hunting days. He longed to hunt again, to scour the desert after gazelle and ostrich, stalk leopards among the bamboos, strike into forests full of rhinoceros, scale impossible mountains where the eagle screamed, and wrestle with bears on icebergs in the polar sea. Sometimes, in dreams, he saw himself like our father Adam sitting in the middle of Paradise with the entire race of animals around him. He stretched forth an arm and they died. Or else they paraded before him two by two in order of size, from elephants and lions to ermines and ducks, as on the day when they entered Noah's ark.

Standing in a cave's mouth, hidden, he rained darts on them, darts that never missed. More animals appeared, endless animals, until, wild-eyed, he woke at last.

There were princes among his acquaintance who invited him to hunt. He refused, thinking by such penance to turn aside the curse. He believed that the fate of his father and mother was linked in some way with the slaughtering of animals. Yet he grieved because he could not see his parents, and his other great desire, the secret one, became more and more unbearable.

His wife hoped to divert him and so engaged jugglers and dancers to perform in the castle, or traveled with him into the country in an open litter, or lay beside him in a boat while they watched the play of wandering fish in sky-clear water. She pelted him with flowers, she sat at his feet and plucked charmingly at the three strings of an old mandolin, and then, in despair, "My dear good lord, what ails you?" she asked mildly, laying a hand on his shoulder.

For a long time he refused to answer though sometimes he wept. Then one day he told her what was horribly on his mind. She fought against it, she argued well. Very probably his father and mother were dead already, and if by chance they were alive still and he should see them again, whatever could make him commit so abominable an act, what weird circumstance or impossible motive? His fears were all groundless, she said, and he should go back to hunting. Julian listened smiling but could not bring himself to yield.

One August night as they were preparing for sleep and she was already in bed and Julian was at his prayers, he heard a fox barking at a distance and, nearer by, directly under the window, soft, stealthy, padding footfalls. Now he was at the window and looking down in the gloom on some vague prowling forms, the shadows, as it were, of animals. He was too strongly tempted. From its hook on the wall, he seized his old quiver, and when his wife looked at him, astonished, he said, "You see! I obey you. I shall be back at sunrise." Suddenly she was afraid and began to speak of accidents and injuries but Julian comforted her and left, surprised to see her so changed.

Soon afterwards a page informed her that two strangers had come inquiring for the lord, in his absence they begged to see his lady at once. They came in to her, an aged couple, each of them leaning heavily on a stick, the dust of the road on their ragged clothes. They made bold to say that they brought news of Julian's father and mother and she leaned from her bed to listen. But first they exchanged a glance and asked if he ever spoke of his parents, still loved them.

"Ah, yes!" she said.

"Well, we are his parents!" they cried, and sat themselves down because they were very tired.

She hesitated. Could it be so? They guessed her doubt and went on to offer proof by describing a curious birthmark on Julian's body. She leaped from bed crying to the page to bring them food. But hungry as they looked, they ate little and she saw how their bony fingers shook when



they raised their cups She answered their many questions about their son but took pains to conceal his terrible obsession They told her that they had left their castle when Julian failed to return, and wandered for years in search of him, following vague clues, never losing hope So much of their money had gone into meeting river tolls and inn charges, princes exactions and those of highwaymen, that they were now quite penniless and had to beg their way But what of that, when they would soon be able to take Julian in their arms! How happy he must be to have so pretty a wife, they said, and they gazed long at her and kissed and kissed her The fine room made them stare, and the old man inquired why the walls bore the Emperor of Occitania's coat-of-arms

"He is my father," she said

He started, remembering what the gypsy had prophesied, while his wife called to mind the prophecy of the hermit No doubt their son's present happiness promised some even greater, some eternal, glory to come, and the old couple sat wide-eyed in the blaze of the great candelabra on the table

They must have been very handsome in their youth The mother, her fine abundant hair intact, wore it in lengthy white braids along her cheek, while the father, with his great height and great beard, resembled some statue in a church Julian's wife persuaded them not to wait up for him She made them sleep in her own bed, tucked them away like children and drew the curtains They were asleep soon, and outside, in the first gleams of dawn, small birds were singing

Julian had crossed the park and come into the forest, his step eager, his senses alert to the soft grass and mild moonlit air Shadows were deep on the moss banks under trees At intervals there were moon-drenched clearings where he abruptly halted, thinking he was about to plunge into a woodland pond, and there were real ponds, which he mistook for clearings Everywhere the silence was intense, there was no trace of the animals which only a moment ago had been prowling around the castle He was now in a dense stand of trees where the gloom was especially thick He felt the play of warm scented airs on his flesh His feet sank among dead leaves and he stopped, leaning breathless against an oak

Then a dark, still darker, something leaped suddenly from behind him, a wild boar, which was off before he had time to seize his bow and which he mourned the loss of as if that was a great misfortune Leaving the woods he spied a wolf stealing along a hedge and let fly an arrow The wolf stopped, looked briefly around at him, and went on It trotted evenly along, keeping the same distance from him, halting at intervals, but when Julian started to take aim, it fled Thus he covered a wide plain, then a tract of sand hills, and came out on high ground overlooking miles of country below

He was among great flat jumbled stones, the scatterings of some old graveyard long abandoned to the weather He stumbled over moldy crosses leaning sadly askew among the stones, and he trod on the bones of the dead There was a stirring of vague shapes in the dark of the tombs,

hyenas in wild-eyed panting flight Their hooves came clattering over the stones and they closed in on Julian, sniffing, yawning, showing their gums He drew his sword and they fled, severally, at a headlong limping gallop, kicking up a dust which finally hid them from sight

Later, in a ravine, there was a wild bull pawing the sand and menacing him with lowered horns Julian thrust at it with his lance but the lance sang out and fell in splinters as if it had come against some bull cast in bronze and he closed his eyes, expecting to be charged and killed When he opened them the bull was gone

His heart sank with shame, his strength gave way before some higher power, and striking back into the forest, he headed for home He was in a tangle of creepers, cutting a passage with his sword, when a weasel shot between his legs, a panther, leaping, cleared his shoulder, around the trunk of an ash a snake coiled upward, from out the leaves above, a huge jackdaw eyed him, and it was as if the sky had rained down all its stars upon the forest, for everywhere around him, sparking the darkness, were the innumerable eyes of beasts—owls, squirrels, monkeys, parrots, bobcats

Julian attacked them with arrows but the feathered shafts only showered like white butterflies among the leaves He threw stones, but they dropped harmlessly to earth He raged, cursed himself, made the forest loud with imprecations Then the various animals he had just been hunting showed themselves and came round him in a narrow circle, keeping erect or going down on their haunches There he stood in the midst of them, terrified and quite unable to move By making a great effort he succeeded in taking a step forward As soon as he moved, wings began to flutter in the trees, paws stirred on the ground, and the whole assemblage moved with him He went on, the hyenas striding ahead, the wolf and the boar behind, the bull, swinging its enormous head, on his left, the snake coiling along through the grass on his right, the panther advancing at a distance with arched back and long soft-footed strides He walked very slowly to avoid exciting them and as he went he saw porcupines, foxes, jackals, vipers and bears breaking cover around him He began to run and they ran too The snake hissed, the dirtier creatures slavered, he felt the boar's tusks prodding at his heels, the wolf's hairy snout nuzzling his hand Monkeys pinched him and made faces, a weasel somersaulted over his feet, a bear knocked his cap from his head with a backswing of its paw, and the panther, after chewing placidly on an arrow, let it drop with disdain

There was irony in their sly motions Watching him from the corners of their eyes, they seemed to be planning some revenge, and Julian, dazed by buzzing insects and the slapping of birds' tails and the breath from many nostrils, walked like a blind man with eyes closed and arms flung out, not daring even to cry, "Have mercy!"

A cock crowed, others replied, day was breaking, and Julian made out the lines of the castle roof riding above the orange trees Then he discovered some partridges fluttering in a stubblefield close by He flung off his cloak and threw it over them like a net On lifting it, however, he found only the decaying body of a bird long dead This was the worst

irony yet, he raged anew, the thirst to kill came over him and, failing beasts, he would gladly have killed men. Quickly he mounted the three terraces and with a blow of his fist swung the door wide. But on the stairs within he remembered his darling wife and his heart softened. She was no doubt asleep and he would have the pleasure of surprising her. Quietly, his sandals in his hand, he turned the knob and entered their bedroom.

The early light came dimly through leaded windows. Julian stumbled over some clothes lying on the floor, a little farther, and he knocked against a table loaded with dishes. "She must have eaten," he thought and advanced with caution towards the alcove where, in total darkness, the bed stood. He stopped to kiss his wife, bending over the two who lay there side by side in sleep. His lips touched a man's beard and he fell back, thinking he was out of his mind. He stooped over the bed again and this time his searching fingers discovered a woman's long hair. To assure himself that he had been mistaken, he felt for the beard again—and found it! found a man there, a man lying with his wife.

He was upon them in a fury, striking with his dagger, foaming, stamping, howling like a wild beast. At last he stopped. Pierced through the heart they had not so much as stirred, they were dead. He heard the rattle of death in their throats, rhythmic, prolonged, growing feebler at last, mingling then with another sound, now vague and far off, now coming steadily closer, swelling, ringing out cruelly, and he recognized in terror the belling of the great black stag.

He turned and saw in the door, candle in hand, ghostlike, the pale figure of his wife. Drawn there by the sounds of violence, she took it all in with one wide glance and fled in horror, dropping the candle. Julian picked it up.

His father and mother lay face up before him with great wounds in their breasts. In their superb gentle eyes was the look of people intent on keeping a secret forever. There was blood on their white hands, the bedclothes, the floor, the ivory crucifix on the alcove wall. The glare of the newly risen sun made the whole room red as if with blood. Julian looked at the dead. He said to himself, endeavored to believe, that this thing could not be, that he must be entangled in some fearful error. To make sure of their identity he stooped close over the old man's face and saw beneath open lids two eyes, now glazed, which scorched him like fire. He then circled the bed to where, in the dark recesses of the alcove, the other body lay, the face half hidden by white hair. He lifted the head with one hand and with the other held the candle close to it while drop by drop the bed discharged its load of blood upon the floor.

At evening he came in where his wife was and speaking with a stranger's voice bade her first of all not to answer him or come near him or even look at him, then to obey, under penalty of damnation, his various commands, every one of which she must consider irrevocable.

In the death-chamber she would find written instructions for the funeral. These she must carry out to the letter. To her he made over everything he owned—castle, serfs, goods—even the clothes on his back and the sandals on his feet, which she would find presently at the stair head.

The dead were splendidly interred in an abbey church at three days' journey from the castle. A monk, his face concealed by his hood, followed the procession at a distance and to him no one dared speak. All during the Mass he lay flat on the porch floor, his arms crossed, his face in the dust.

After the burial he was seen to take the road leading to the mountains. He looked back at intervals and finally was gone.

### III

He went about the world begging his way. He reached up a hand to horsemen on the roads, bent a knee to reapers in the fields, stood patiently at castle gates, and looked so grief-stricken that he was not refused. Humbly, again and again, he told his story and people fled crossing themselves. When he passed through a village where he had been before, they abused and stoned him and shut their doors in his face, although a few charitable souls put plates of food on their windowsills before banging the shutters on the unholy sight of him.

Shunned by all, he began to shun mankind himself, feeding on roots, plants and windfalls, and shellfish gathered along the beaches of the world. Sometimes, on coming over a hill, he would find himself in sight of some multitudinous jumble of roofs and spires below, from the dark maze of streets came the steady hum of human life and he would be drawn downward by a need to be with other people. No sooner was he in the streets, however, than the brutal look on people's faces, the bustle in the stores, the uproar of shops and foundries, the callous idle talk, would begin to freeze his heart. On feast days when bells began tolling at day-break and people responded with excitement, he watched them pouring from their houses, the dancers in the public squares, the beer fountains at the crossroads, the rich bright hangings on the princely houses, and then after dark he spied through windows on the long family tables where old people sat with children in their laps. He would turn away in tears and strike back into the country.

He gazed with yearning at colts in their pastures, birds in their nests, insects among flowers, all fled at his approach. He sought out deserted places but there was the rattle of death in the blowing of wind, tears in the dewdrops, blood in the sun at evening, and parricide by night in his dreams. He undertook acts of mortification, ascended on his knees to high and holy places. But the horror in his mind corrupted the splendor of tabernacles and nullified the rigor of his penances. He did not curse God for having caused him to murder, but having murdered he despaired of God. The horror he felt of his own person made him risk it eagerly in dangerous enterprises. He rescued children from pits in the earth and helpless men and women from their burning houses. But the earth rejected him, the flames spared him. With the passing of time he suffered not less but more and finally he resolved to die.

One day, however, while he was staring into a spring of water to judge of its depth, he saw appear on the far side an old man with so much misery

on his lean white-bearded face that Julian suddenly wept. The old man fell to weeping too, and Julian, looking him in the face, knew him and did not know him. "My father!" he cried and thought no more of destroying himself.

So, weighed down with memories, he traversed many lands and came at last to a river which tore along swiftly between marshy shores and had long defied anyone to cross it. Mud-bound and half concealed in the reeds lay an old boat, and on looking around Julian also discovered a pair of oars. It came over him that he might devote his life to the service of others.

He began by constructing a sort of ramp across the marsh, connecting the river's channel with solid ground. He broke his nails on enormous stones, carried them pressed against his heaving stomach, sprawled in the mud, sank into it, was nearly drowned several times. Then he set to patching up the boat from the debris of other vessels and he made himself a hut of logs and clay.

Travelers soon heard of Julian's ferry and began to flock to it. On the far side a flag was raised to summon him and Julian would leap aboard and row across for the waiting passengers. The boat was heavy to begin with and when it was loaded with men and their belongings including domestic animals that kicked and reared in alarm, it could only be managed with difficulty. He asked nothing for his trouble though some of the passengers gave him worn-out clothes or leftovers from their store of food. The ugly ones cursed him out and he reproved them gently. If they went on cursing, he was satisfied to bless them.

A small table, a stool, a bed made of dry leaves, and three earthen bowls were all the furnishings he had while a couple of holes in the wall served as windows. In front the great river rolled its turgid green flood, at the rear stretched a vast colorless barrens strewn with shallow ponds. In spring the damp soil reeked of decay, then came powerful winds driving dust before them till it roiled the water and gritted between his teeth, then came mosquitoes in endless humming biting clouds, then appalling frosts which turned the earth to stone and gave him in his chilled and exhausted state a tremendous appetite for meat. Months passed when Julian, seeing no one, sat with his eyes shut trying to revive in memory the days of his youth. A castle courtyard would rise before him with greyhounds at rest on the terraces, grooms busy in the armory, and a yellow-haired boy sitting in a bower of vines between an old man wrapped in furs and a lady in a tall bonnet. Suddenly an image of two dead bodies would intervene and he would fling himself on his bed and sob, "Ah, poor father! Poor mother, poor mother!" and, dozing off, he would continue to see them in dreams.

There came a night when he thought he heard someone calling him in his sleep. He strained to listen but made out nothing except the river's roar. Then "Julian!" the same voice cried again, "Julian!" It reached him, amazingly, from the far shore of the broad and noisy river. "Julian!" he heard again, the voice loud, vibrant, like a church bell. With lantern

alight, he stepped from the hut into a night wild with wind and rain, the river foaming white in the intense darkness

He hesitated briefly then leapt into the boat and cast off. Instantly the waves subsided and the boat sped easily to the far shore. There a man stood waiting in a ragged coat, his face white as a plaster mask, his eyes redder than coals. Holding up his lantern Julian saw that the stranger was covered with hideous sores. He was a leper but he had the majesty of a king. The boat gave alarmingly under his weight, then rose again, and Julian began to work the oars.

At every stroke the bow slapped against a wave and was flung aloft, while dark water streamed alongside. Masses of water gathered beneath, thrusting the boat skyward, then fell away, leaving it to skitter down into some deep trough where it spun helplessly. Julian could only keep it under control by leaning far forward and then, feet powerfully braced, hands riveted to the oar handles, flinging his torso backward with a convulsive pull at the oars. Hail cut his hands, rain poured down his back, and suddenly breathless in the terrible wind, he paused, letting the boat drift with the waves. But feeling that something very great was at stake, a mission that he must not fail, he once more seized the oars and made them rattle on their pins in the loud wind. At the bow the lantern burned, its rays intercepted at intervals by the fluttering passages of storm-blown birds. But always he saw the eyes of the Leper who stood immobile at the stern. And they were a long, long time in crossing.

Arrived in the hut Julian closed the door behind them. The Leper took the stool and sat. His shroudlike dress fell to his loins, his chest, his shoulders, his lean arms were plastered with sores. There were great pained wrinkles on his forehead. Skeleton-like, he had a hole instead of a nose, his lips were blue, a steamy and malodorous exhalation pouring from them.

"I am hungry!" he said.

Julian gave him what he had, a black loaf and rind of bacon. When he had devoured them, the table, bowl and knife handle bore the same sores that he had on his body. Then he said,

"I am thirsty!"

Julian went to get the water jug and found it full of some exciting sweet-smelling liquid. It was wine—a wonderful find. The Leper reached for it and drank the jug dry at a draught.

Then he said, "I am cold."

Julian put his candle to a heap of dried fern in the middle of the floor. The Leper, on his knees, crouched by the fire, body shaking, sores running, eyes growing dim. He was weakening visibly, and in a faint voice murmured,

"Your bed!"

Julian helped him to it gently and covered him with everything he had, even the tarpaulin for his boat. The Leper groaned through his teeth, the rattle of death came faster in his chest, and with every breath he took his belly sank into his spine. At last his eyes went closed.

"My bones are like ice! Come close to me!"

And Julian, raising the tarpaulin, lay down at his side on the dry leaves. The Leper turned his head "Take off your clothes," he commanded, "that I may have the warmth of your body." Julian flung off his clothes and lay down once more as naked as on the day he was born. Against his thigh he felt the Leper's skin, colder than a snake and rough as a file. He tried to cheer him but the other merely said in a low whisper, "I am dying. Come closer, get me warm! No! not with your hands, with your whole body."

Julian laid himself at full length upon him, mouth to mouth, breast to breast. The Leper clasped him hard and suddenly his eyes shone like stars, the hair on his head was like the rays of the sun, his breath was like the breath of the rose, there was incense in the smoke of the fern-fire, music on the water. To Julian, fainting, came a great bliss, a joy more than human, and the one who held him grew tall, grew taller, till his head and feet touched the two walls of the hut. The roof gaped, the wide firmament looked down—and Julian rose into blue altitudes face to face with Our Lord Jesus who carried him up to heaven.

And that is the story of Saint Julian the Hospitaller more or less as you will find it on a church window in my part of the country.

Two gentlemen who were in the lavatory at the time tried to lift him up but he was quite helpless. He lay curled up at the foot of the stairs down which he had fallen. They succeeded in turning him over. His hat had rolled a few yards away and his clothes were smeared with the filth and ooze on the floor on which he had lain, face downwards. His eyes were closed and he breathed with a grunting noise. A thin stream of blood trickled from the corner of his mouth.

These two gentlemen and one of the curates carried him up the stairs and laid him down again on the floor of the bar. In two minutes he was surrounded by a ring of men. The manager of the bar asked everyone who he was and who was with him. No one knew who he was but one of the curates said he had served the gentleman with a small rum.

"Was he by himself?" asked the manager.

"No, sir. There was two gentlemen with him."

"And where are they?"

No one knew, a voice said.

"Give him air. He's fainted."

The ring of onlookers distended and closed again elastically. A dark medal of blood had formed itself near the man's head on the tessellated floor. The manager, alarmed by the grey pallor of the man's face, sent for a policeman.

His collar was unfastened and his necktie undone. He opened his eyes for an instant, sighed and closed them again. One of the gentlemen who had carried him upstairs held a dinged silk hat in his hand. The manager asked repeatedly did no one know who the injured man was or where had his friends gone. The door of the bar opened and an immense constable entered. A crowd which had followed him down the laneway collected outside the door, struggling to look in through the glass panels.

The manager at once began to narrate what he knew. The constable, a young man with thick immobile features, listened. He moved his head slowly to right and left and from the manager to the person on the floor, as if he feared to be the victim of some delusion. Then he drew off his glove, produced a small book from his waist, licked the lead of his pencil and made ready to indite. He asked in a suspicious provincial accent:

"Who is the man? What's his name and address?"

A young man in a cycling-suit cleared his way through the ring of



bystanders He knelt down promptly beside the injured man and called for water The constable knelt down also to help The young man washed the blood from the injured man's mouth and then called for some brandy The constable repeated the order in an authoritative voice until a curate came running with the glass The brandy was forced down the man's throat In a few seconds he opened his eyes and looked about him He looked at the circle of faces and then, understanding, strove to rise to his feet

"You're all right now?" asked the young man in the cycling-suit

"Sha, 's nothing," said the injured man, trying to stand up

He was helped to his feet The manager said something about a hospital and some of the bystanders gave advice The battered silk hat was placed on the man's head The constable asked

"Where do you live?"

The man, without answering, began to twirl the ends of his moustache He made light of his accident It was nothing, he said only a little accident He spoke very thickly

"Where do you live?" repeated the constable

The man said they were to get a cab for him While the point was being debated a tall agile gentleman of fair complexion, wearing a long yellow ulster, came from the far end of the bar Seeing the spectacle, he called out

"Hallo, Tom, old man! What's the trouble?"

"Sha, 's nothing," said the man

The new-comer surveyed the deplorable figure before him and then turned to the constable, saying

"It's all right, constable I'll see him home "

The constable touched his helmet and answered

"All right, Mr Power!"

"Come now, Tom," said Mr Power, taking his friend by the arm "No bones broken What? Can you walk?"

The young man in the cycling-suit took the man by the other arm and the crowd divided

"How did you get yourself into this mess?" asked Mr Power

"The gentleman fell down the stairs," said the young man

"I 'ery 'uch o'liged to you, sir," said the injured man

"Not at all "

"'ant' we have a little ?"

"Not now Not now "

The three men left the bar and the crowd sifted through the doors in to the laneway The manager brought the constable to the stairs to inspect the scene of the accident They agreed that the gentleman must have missed his footing The customers returned to the counter and a curate set about removing the traces of blood from the floor

When they came out into Grafton Street, Mr Power whistled for an outsider The injured man said again as well as he could

"I 'ery 'uch o'liged to you, sir I hope we'll 'eet again 'y na'e is Kernan "

The shock and the incipient pain had partly sobered him

"Don't mention it," said the young man

They shook hands Mr Kernan was hoisted on to the car and, while Mr Power was giving directions to the carman, he expressed his gratitude to the young man and regretted that they could not have a little drink together

"Another time," said the young man

The car drove off towards Westmoreland Street As it passed the Ballast Office the clock showed half-past nine A keen east wind hit them blowing from the mouth of the river Mr Kernan was huddled together with cold His friend asked him to tell how the accident had happened

"I 'ain't 'an," he answered, "'y 'ongue is hurt"

"Show"

The other leaned over the well of the car and peered into Mr Kernan's mouth but he could not see He struck a match and, sheltering it in the shell of his hands, peered again into the mouth which Mr Kernan opened obediently The swaying movement of the car brought the match to and from the opened mouth The lower teeth and gums were covered with clotted blood and a minute piece of the tongue seemed to have been bitten off The match was blown out

"That's ugly," said Mr Power

"Sha, 's nothing," said Mr Kernan, closing his mouth and pulling the collar of his filthy coat across his neck

Mr Kernan was a commercial traveller of the old school which believed in the dignity of its calling He had never been seen in the city without a silk hat of some decency and a pair of gaiters By grace of these two articles of clothing, he said, a man could always pass muster He carried on the tradition of his Napoleon, the great Blackwhite, whose memory he evoked at times by legend and mimicry Modern business methods had spared him only so far as to allow him a little office in Crowe Street, on the window blind of which was written the name of his firm with the address—London, E C On the mantelpiece of this little office a little leaden battalion of canisters was drawn up and on the table before the window stood four or five china bowls which were usually half full of a black liquid From these bowls Mr Kernan tasted tea He took a mouthful, drew it up, saturated his palate with it and then spat it forth into the grate Then he paused to judge

Mr Power, a much younger man, was employed in the Royal Irish Constabulary Office in Dublin Castle The arc of his social rise intersected the arc of his friend's decline, but Mr Kernan's decline was mitigated by the fact that certain of those friends who had known him at his highest point of success still esteemed him as a character Mr Power was one of these friends His inexplicable debts were a byword in his circle, he was a debonair young man

The car halted before a small house on the Glasnevin road and Mr Kernan was helped into the house His wife put him to bed, while Mr Power sat downstairs in the kitchen asking the children where they went to school and what book they were in The children—two girls and a boy, conscious of their father's helplessness and of their mother's absence,

began some horseplay with him. He was surprised at their manners and at their accents, and his brow grew thoughtful. After a while Mrs. Kernan entered the kitchen, exclaiming

"Such a sight! O, he'll do for himself one day and that's the holy alls of it. He's been drinking since Friday."

Mr. Power was careful to explain to her that he was not responsible, that he had come on the scene by the merest accident. Mrs. Kernan, remembering Mr. Power's good offices during domestic quarrels, as well as many small, but opportune loans, said

"O, you needn't tell me that, Mr. Power. I know you're a friend of his, not like some of the others he does be with. They're all right so long as he has money in his pocket to keep him out from his wife and family. Nice friends! Who was he with to-night, I'd like to know?"

Mr. Power shook his head but said nothing.

"I'm so sorry," she continued, "that I've nothing in the house to offer you. But if you wait a minute I'll send round to Fogarty's, at the corner."

Mr. Power stood up.

"We were waiting for him to come home with the money. He never seems to think he has a home at all."

"O, now, Mrs. Kernan," said Mr. Power, "we'll make him turn over a new leaf. I'll talk to Martin. He's the man. We'll come here one of these nights and talk it over."

She saw him to the door. The carman was stamping up and down the footpath, and swinging his arms to warm himself.

"It's very kind of you to bring him home," she said.

"Not at all," said Mr. Power.

He got up on the car. As it drove off he raised his hat to her gaily.

"We'll make a new man of him," he said. "Good-night, Mrs. Kernan."

Mrs. Kernan's puzzled eyes watched the car till it was out of sight. Then she withdrew them, went into the house and emptied her husband's pockets.

She was an active, practical woman of middle age. Not long before she had celebrated her silver wedding and renewed her intimacy with her husband by waltzing with him to Mr. Power's accompaniment. In her days of courtship, Mr. Kernan had seemed to her a not ungallant figure and she still hurried to the chapel door whenever a wedding was reported and, seeing the bridal pair, recalled with vivid pleasure how she had passed out of the Star of the Sea Church in Sandymount, leaning on the arm of a jovial well-fed man, who was dressed smartly in a frock-coat and lavender trousers and carried a silk hat gracefully balanced upon his other arm. After three weeks she had found a wife's life irksome and, later on, when she was beginning to find it unbearable, she had become a mother. The part of mother presented to her no insuperable difficulties and for twenty-five years she had kept house shrewdly for her husband. Her two eldest sons were launched. One was in a draper's shop in Glasgow and the other was clerk to a tea merchant in Belfast. They were good

sons, wrote regularly and sometimes sent home money. The other children were still at school.

Mr Kernan sent a letter to his office next day and remained in bed. She made beef-tea for him and scolded him roundly. She accepted his frequent intemperance as part of the climate, healed him dutifully whenever he was sick and always tried to make him eat a breakfast. There were worse husbands. He had never been violent since the boys had grown up, and she knew that he would walk to the end of Thomas Street and back again to book even a small order.

Two nights after, his friends came to see him. She brought them up to his bedroom, the air of which was impregnated with a personal odour, and gave them chairs at the fire. Mr Kernan's tongue, the occasional stinging pain of which had made him somewhat irritable during the day, became more polite. He sat propped up in the bed by pillows and the little colour in his puffy cheeks made them resemble warm cinders. He apologised to his guests for the disorder of the room, but at the same time looked at them a little proudly, with a veteran's pride.

He was quite unconscious that he was the victim of a plot which his friends, Mr Cunningham, Mr M'Coy and Mr Power had disclosed to Mrs Kernan in the parlour. The idea had been Mr Power's, but its development was entrusted to Mr Cunningham. Mr Kernan came of Protestant stock and, though he had been converted to the Catholic faith at the time of his marriage, he had not been in the pale of the Church for twenty years. He was fond, moreover, of giving side-thrusts at Catholicism.

Mr Cunningham was the very man for such a case. He was an elder colleague of Mr Power. His own domestic life was not very happy. People had great sympathy with him, for it was known that he had married an unpresentable woman who was an incurable drunkard. He had set up house for her six times, and each time she had pawned the furniture on him.

Everyone had respect for poor Martin Cunningham. He was a thoroughly sensible man, influential and intelligent. His blade of human knowledge, natural astuteness particularised by long association with cases in the police courts, had been tempered by brief immersions in the waters of general philosophy. He was well informed. His friends bowed to his opinions and considered that his face was like Shakespeare's.

When the plot had been disclosed to her, Mrs Kernan had said

"I leave it all in your hands, Mr Cunningham."

After a quarter of a century of married life, she had very few illusions left. Religion for her was a habit, and she suspected that a man of her husband's age would not change greatly before death. She was tempted to see a curious appropriateness in his accident and, but that she did not wish to seem bloody-minded, she would have told the gentlemen that Mr Kernan's tongue would not suffer by being shortened. However, Mr Cunningham was a capable man, and religion was religion. The scheme might do good and, at least, it could do no harm. Her beliefs were not extravagant. She believed steadily in the Sacred Heart as the most gen-

erally useful of all Catholic devotions and approved of the sacraments. Her faith was bounded by her kitchen, but, if she was put to it, she could believe also in the banshee and in the Holy Ghost.

The gentlemen began to talk of the accident. Mr Cunningham said that he had once known a similar case. A man of seventy had bitten off a piece of his tongue during an epileptic fit and the tongue had filled in again, so that no one could see a trace of the bite.

"Well, I'm not seventy," said the invalid.

"God forbid," said Mr Cunningham.

"It doesn't pain you now?" asked Mr M'Coy.

Mr M'Coy had been at one time a tenor of some reputation. His wife, who had been a soprano, still taught young children to play the piano at low terms. His line of life had not been the shortest distance between two points and for short periods he had been driven to live by his wits. He had been a clerk in the Midland Railway, a canvasser for advertisements for *The Irish Times* and for *The Freeman's Journal*, a town traveller for a coal firm on commission, a private inquiry agent, a clerk in the office of the Sub-Sheriff, and he had recently become secretary to the City Coroner. His new office made him professionally interested in Mr Kernan's case.

"Pain? Not much," answered Mr Kernan. "But it's so sickening I feel as if I wanted to retch off."

"That's the booze," said Mr Cunningham firmly.

"No," said Mr Kernan. "I think I caught cold on the car. There's something keeps coming into my throat, phlegm or——"

"Mucus," said Mr M'Coy.

"It keeps coming like from down in my throat, sickening thing."

"Yes, yes," said Mr M'Coy, "that's the thorax."

He looked at Mr Cunningham and Mr Power at the same time with an air of challenge. Mr Cunningham nodded his head rapidly and Mr Power said:

"Ah, well, all's well that ends well."

"I'm very much obliged to you, old man," said the invalid.

Mr Power waved his hand.

"Those other two fellows I was with——"

"Who were you with?" asked Mr Cunningham.

"A chap I don't know his name. Damn it now, what's his name? Little chap with sandy hair."

"And who else?"

"Harford."

"Hm," said Mr Cunningham.

When Mr Cunningham made that remark, people were silent. It was known that the speaker had secret sources of information. In this case the monosyllable had a moral intention. Mr Harford sometimes formed one of a little detachment which left the city shortly after noon on Sunday with the purpose of arriving as soon as possible at some public-house on the outskirts of the city where its members duly qualified themselves as *bona-fide* travellers. But his fellow-travellers had never consented to

overlook his origin. He had begun life as an obscure financier by lending small sums of money to workmen at usurious interest. Later on he had become the partner of a very fat, short gentleman, Mr. Goldberg, in the Liffey Loan Bank. Though he had never embraced more than the Jewish ethical code, his fellow-Catholics, whenever they had smarted in person or by proxy under his exactions, spoke of him bitterly as an Irish Jew and an illiterate, and saw divine disapproval of usury made manifest through the person of his idiot son. At other times they remembered his good points.

"I wonder where did he go to," said Mr. Kernan.

He wished the details of the incident to remain vague. He wished his friends to think there had been some mistake, that Mr. Harford and he had missed each other. His friends, who knew quite well Mr. Harford's manners in drinking, were silent. Mr. Power said again:

"All's well that ends well."

Mr. Kernan changed the subject at once.

"That was a decent young chap, that medical fellow," he said. "Only for him——"

"O, only for him," said Mr. Power, "it might have been a case of seven days, without the option of a fine."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Kernan, trying to remember. "I remember now there was a policeman. Decent young fellow, he seemed. How did it happen at all?"

"It happened that you were peloothered, Tom," said Mr. Cunningham gravely.

"True bill," said Mr. Kernan, equally gravely.

"I suppose you squared the constable, Jack," said Mr. M'Coy.

Mr. Power did not relish the use of his Christian name. He was not straight-laced, but he could not forget that Mr. M'Coy had recently made a crusade in search of valises and portmanteaus to enable Mrs. M'Coy to fulfill imaginary engagements in the country. More than he resented the fact that he had been victimised, he resented such low playing of the game. He answered the question, therefore, as if Mr. Kernan had asked it.

The narrative made Mr. Kernan indignant. He was keenly conscious of his citizenship, wished to live with his city on terms mutually honourable and resented any affront put upon him by those whom he called country bumpkins.

"Is this what we pay rates for?" he asked. "To feed and clothe these ignorant bostooms and they're nothing else."

Mr. Cunningham laughed. He was a Castle official only during office hours.

"How could they be anything else, Tom?" he said.

He assumed a thick, provincial accent and said in a tone of command:

"65, catch your cabbage!"

Everyone laughed. Mr. M'Coy, who wanted to enter the conversation by any door, pretended that he had never heard the story. Mr. Cunningham said:

"It is supposed—they say, you know—to take place in the depot where they get these thundering big country fellows, omadhauns, you know, to drill. The sergeant makes them stand in a row against the wall and hold up their plates."

He illustrated the story by grotesque gestures.

"At dinner, you know. Then he has a bloody big bowl of cabbage before him on the table and a bloody big spoon like a shovel. He takes up a wad of cabbage on the spoon and pegs it across the room and the poor devils have to try and catch it on their plates. 65 *catch your cabbage*"

Everyone laughed again, but Mr. Kernan was somewhat indignant still. He talked of writing a letter to the papers.

"These yahoos coming up here," he said, "think they can boss the people. I needn't tell you, Martin, what kind of men they are."

Mr. Cunningham gave a qualified assent.

"It's like everything else in this world," he said. "You get some bad ones and you get some good ones."

"O yes, you get some good ones, I admit," said Mr. Kernan, satisfied.

"It's better to have nothing to say to them," said Mr. M'Coy. "That's my opinion!"

Mrs. Kernan entered the room and, placing a tray on the table, said "Help yourselves, gentlemen."

Mr. Power stood up to officiate, offering her his chair. She declined it, saying she was going downstairs, and, after having exchanged a nod with Mr. Cunningham behind Mr. Power's back, prepared to leave the room. Her husband called out to her:

"And have you nothing for me, duckie?"

"O, you! The back of my hand to you!" said Mrs. Kernan tartly.

Her husband called after her:

"Nothing for poor little hubby!"

He assumed such a comical face and voice that the distribution of the bottles of stout took place amid general merriment.

The gentlemen drank from their glasses, set the glasses again on the table and paused. Then Mr. Cunningham turned towards Mr. Power and said casually:

"On Thursday night, you said, Jack?"

"Thursday, yes," said Mr. Power.

"Righto!" said Mr. Cunningham promptly.

"We can meet in M'Auley's," said Mr. M'Coy. "That'll be the most convenient place."

"But we mustn't be late," said Mr. Power earnestly, "because it is sure to be crammed to the doors."

"We can meet at half-seven," said Mr. M'Coy.

"Righto!" said Mr. Cunningham.

"Half-seven at M'Auley's be it!"

There was a short silence. Mr. Kernan waited to see whether he would be taken into his friends' confidence. Then he asked:

"What's in the wind?"

"O, it's nothing," said Mr Cunningham "It's only a little matter that we're arranging about for Thursday "

"The opera, is it?" said Mr Kernan

"No, no," said Mr Cunningham in an evasive tone, "it's just a little spiritual matter "

"O," said Mr Kernan

There was silence again Then Mr Power said, point blank

"To tell you the truth, Tom, we're going to make a retreat "

"Yes, that's it," said Mr Cunningham "Jack and I and M'Coy here—we're all going to wash the pot "

He uttered the metaphor with a certain homely energy and, encouraged by his own voice, proceeded

"You see, we may as well all admit we're a nice collection of scoundrels, one and all I say, one and all," he added with gruff charity and turning to Mr Power "Own up now!"

"I own up," said Mr Power

"And I own up," said Mr M'Coy

"So we're going to wash the pot together," said Mr Cunningham

A thought seemed to strike him He turned suddenly to the invalid and said

"D'ye know what, Tom, has just occurred to me? You might join in and we'd have a four-handed reel "

"Good idea," said Mr Power "The four of us together "

Mr Kernan was silent The proposal conveyed very little meaning to his mind, but, understanding that some spiritual agencies were about to concern themselves on his behalf, he thought he owed it to his dignity to show a stiff neck He took no part in the conversation for a long while but listened, with an air of calm enmity, while his friends discussed the Jesuits

"I haven't such a bad opinion of the Jesuits," he said, intervening at length "They're an educated order I believe they mean well, too "

"They're the grandest order in the Church, Tom," said Mr Cunningham, with enthusiasm "The General of the Jesuits stands next to the Pope "

"There's no mistake about it," said Mr M'Coy, "if you want a thing well done and no flies about, you go to a Jesuit They're the boyos have influence I'll tell you a case in point "

"The Jesuits are a fine body of men," said Mr Power

"It's a curious thing," said Mr Cunningham, "about the Jesuit Order Every other order of the Church had to be reformed at some time or other but the Jesuit Order was never once reformed It never tell away "

"Is that so?" asked Mr M'Coy

"That's a fact," said Mr Cunningham "That's history "

"Look at their church, too," said Mr Power "Look at the congregation they have "

"The Jesuits cater for the upper classes," said Mr M'Coy



"Of course," said Mr Power

"Yes," said Mr Kernan "That's why I have a feeling for them It's some of those secular priests, ignorant, bumptious——"

"They're all good men," said Mr Cunningham, "each in his own way The Irish priesthood is honoured all the world over "

"O yes," said Mr Power

"Not like some of the other priesthoods on the continent," said Mr M'Coy, "unworthy of the name "

"Perhaps you're right," said Mr Kernan, relenting

"Of course I'm right," said Mr Cunningham "I haven't been in the world all this time and seen most sides of it without being a judge of character "

The gentlemen drank again, one following another's example Mr Kernan seemed to be weighing something in his mind He was impressed He had a high opinion of Mr Cunningham as a judge of character and as a reader of faces He asked for particulars

"O, it's just a retreat, you know," said Mr Cunningham "Father Purdon is giving it It's for business men, you know "

"He won't be too hard on us, Tom," said Mr Power persuasively

"Father Purdon? Father Purdon?" said the invalid

"O, you must know him, Tom," said Mr Cunningham stoutly "Fine, jolly fellow! He's a man of the world like ourselves "

"Ah, yes I think I know him Rather red face, tall "

"That's the man "

"And tell me, Martin Is he a good preacher? "

"Munno It's not exactly a sermon, you know It's just a kind of a friendly talk, you know, in a common-sense way "

Mr Kernan deliberated Mr M'Coy said

"Father Tom Burke, that was the boy!"

"O, Father Tom Burke," said Mr Cunningham, "that was a born orator Did you ever hear him, Tom?"

"Did I ever hear him!" said the invalid, nettled "Rather! I heard him "

"And yet they say he wasn't much of a theologian," said Mr Cunningham

"Is that so?" said Mr M'Coy

"O, of course, nothing wrong, you know Only sometimes, they say, he didn't preach what was quite orthodox "

"Ah! he was a splendid man," said Mr M'Coy

"I heard him once," Mr Kernan continued "I forget the subject of his discourse now Crofton and I were in the back of the pit, you know the——"

"The body," said Mr Cunningham

'Yes, in the back near the door I forget now what O yes, it was on the Pope, the late Pope I remember it well Upon my word it was magnificent, the style of the oratory And his voice! God! hadn't he a voice! *The Prisoner of the Vatican*, he called him I remember Crofton saying to me when we came out——"

"But he's an Orangeman, Crofton, isn't he?" said Mr Power

"'Course he is," said Mr Kernan, "and a damned decent Orangeman, too We went into Butler's in Moore Street—faith, I was genuinely moved, tell you the God's truth—and I remember well his very words *Kernan* he said, *we worship at different altars*, he said, *but our belief is the same* Struck me as very well put "

"There's a good deal in that," said Mr Power "There used always be crowds of Protestant in the chapel when Father Tom was preaching "

"There's not much difference between us," said Mr McCoy "We both believe in——"

He hesitated for a moment

" in the Redeemer Only they don't believe in the Pope and in the mother of God "

"But, of course," said Mr Cunningham quietly and effectively, "our religion is *the* religion, the old, original faith "

'Not a doubt of it," said Mr Kernan warmly

Mrs Kernan came to the door of the bedroom and announced

"Here's a visitor for you!"

"Who is it?"

"Mr Fogarty "

O, come in! come in!"

A pale, oval face came forward into the light The arch of its fair trailing moustache was repeated in the fair eyebrows looped above pleasantly astonished eyes Mr Fogarty was a modest grocer He had failed in business in a licensed house in the city because his financial condition had constrained him to tie himself to second-class distillers and brewers He had opened a small shop on Glasnevin Road where, he flattered himself, his manners would ingratiate him with the housewives of the district He bore himself with a certain grace, complimented little children and spoke with a neat enunciation He was not without culture

Mr Fogarty brought a gift with him, a half-pint of special whisky He inquired politely for Mr Kernan, placed his gift on the table and sat down with the company on equal terms Mr Kernan appreciated the gift all the more since he was aware that there was a small account for groceries unsettled between him and Mr Fogarty He said

"I wouldn't doubt you, old man Open that, Jack, will you?"

Mr Power again officiated Glasses were rinsed and five small measures of whisky were poured out This new influence enlivened the conversation Mr Fogarty, sitting on a small area of the chair, was specially interested

'Pope Leo XIII," said Mr Cunningham, "was one of the lights of the age His great idea, you know, was the union of the Latin and Greek Churches That was the aim of his life "

"I often heard he was one of the most intellectual men in Europe said Mr Power "I mean, apart from his being Pope "

"So he was," said Mr Cunningham, "if not *the* most so His motto you know, as Pope, was *Lux upon Lux—Light upon Light*

"No, no," said Mr Fogarty eagerly "I think you're wrong there It was *Lux in Tenebris*, I think—*Light in Darkness* "

"O yes," said Mr M'Coy, '*Tenebrae* "

"Allow me," said Mr Cunningham positively, "it was *Lux upon Lux* And Pius IX his predecessor's motto was *Crux upon Crux*—that is, *Cross upon Cross*—to show the difference between their two pontificates "

The inference was allowed Mr Cunningham continued

"Pope Leo, you know, was a great scholar and a poet "

"He had a strong face," said Mr Kernan

"Yes," said Mr Cunningham "He wrote Latin poetry "

"Is that so?" said Mr Fogarty

Mr M'Coy tasted his whisky contentedly and shook his head with a double intention, saying

"That's no joke, I can tell you "

"We didn't learn that, Tom," said Mr Power, following Mr M'Coy's example, "when we went to the penny-a-week school "

"There was many a good man went to the penny-a-week school with a sod of turf under his oxter," said Mr Kernan sententiously "The old system was the best plain honest education None of your modern trumpery "

"Quite right," said Mr Power

"No superfluities," said Mr Fogarty

He enunciated the word and then drank gravely

"I remember reading," said Mr Cunningham, "that one of Pope Leo's poems was on the invention of the photograph—in Latin, of course "

"On the photograph!" exclaimed Mr Kernan

"Yes," said Mr Cunningham

He also drank from his glass

"Well, you know," said Mr M'Coy, "isn't the photograph wonderful when you come to think of it?"

"O, of course," said Mr Power, "great minds can see things "

"As the poet says *Great minds are very near to madness*," said Mr Fogarty

Mr Kernan seemed to be troubled in mind He made an effort to recall the Protestant theology on some thorny points and in the end addressed Mr Cunningham

"Tell me, Martin," he said "Weren't some of the popes—of course, not our present man, or his predecessor, but some of the old popes—not exactly you know up to the knocker?"

There was a silence Mr Cunningham said

"O, of course, there were some bad lots But the astonishing thing is this Not one of them, not the biggest drunkard, not the most out-and-out ruffian, not one of them ever preached *ex cathedra* a word of false doctrine Now isn't that an astonishing thing?"

"That is," said Mr Kernan

"Yes, because when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*," Mr Fogarty explained, "he is infallible "

"Yes," said Mr Cunningham

'O, I know about the infallibility of the Pope I remember I was younger then Or was it that——?"

Mr Fogarty interrupted He took up the bottle and helped the others to a little more Mr M'Coy, seeing that there was not enough to go round, pleaded that he had not finished his first measure The others accepted under protest The light music of whisky falling into glasses made an agreeable interlude

"What's that you were saying, Tom?" asked Mr M'Coy

"Papal infallibility," said Mr Cunningham, "that was the greatest scene in the whole history of the Church "

"How was that, Martin?" asked Mr Power

Mr Cunningham held up two thick fingers

"In the sacred college, you know, of cardinals and archbishops and bishops there were two men who held out against it while the others were all for it The whole conclave except these two was unanimous No! They wouldn't have it!"

"Ha! ' said Mr M'Coy

"And they were a German cardinal by the name of Dolling or Dowling oi——"

"Dowling was no German, and that's a sure five," said Mr Power, laughing

"Well, this great German cardinal, whatever his name was, was one, and the other was John MacHale "

"What?" cried Mr Kernan "Is it John of Tuam?"

"Are you sure of that now?" asked Mr Fogarty dubiously 'I thought it was some Italian or American "

'John of Tuam," repeated Mr Cunningham, "was the man "

He drank and the other gentlemen followed his lead Then he resumed

"There they were at it, all the cardinals and bishops and archbishops from all the ends of the earth and these two fighting dog and devil until at last the Pope himself stood up and declared infallibility a dogma of the Church *ex cathedra* On the very moment John MacHale, who had been arguing and arguing against it, stood up and shouted out with the voice of a lion *Credo!* "

"*I believe!*" said Mr Fogarty

*Credo!* said Mr Cunningham "That showed the faith he had He submitted the moment the Pope spoke "

"And what about Dowling?" asked Mr M'Coy

'The German cardinal wouldn't submit He left the church "

Mr Cunningham's words had built up the vast image of the church in the minds of his hearers His deep, raucous voice had thrilled them as it uttered the word of belief and submission When Mrs Kernan came into the room, drying her hands, she came into a solemn company She did not disturb the silence, but leaned over the rail at the foot of the bed

"I once saw John MacHale," said Mr Kernan, "and I'll never forget it as long as I live "

He turned towards his wife to be confirmed

"I often told you that?"

Mrs Kernan nodded

"It was at the unveiling of Sir John Gray's statue Edmund Dwyer Gray was speaking, blathering away, and here was this old fellow, crabbed-looking old chap, looking at him from under his bushy eyebrows "

Mr Kernan knitted his brows and, lowering his head like an angry bull, glared at his wife

"God!" he exclaimed, resuming his natural face, "I never saw such an eye in a man's head It was as much as to say *I have you properly taped my lad* He had an eye like a hawk "

"None of the Grays was any good," said Mr Power

There was a pause again Mr Power turned to Mrs Kernan and said with abrupt joviality

"Well, Mrs Kernan, we're going to make your man here a good holy pious and God-fearing Roman Catholic "

He swept his arm round the company inclusively

"We're all going to make a retreat together and confess our sins—and God knows we want it badly "

'I don't mind," said Mr Kernan, smiling a little nervously

Mrs Kernan thought it would be wiser to conceal her satisfaction So she said

'I pity the poor priest that has to listen to your tale "

Mr Kernan's expression changed

"If he doesn't like it," he said bluntly, 'he can do the other thing I'll just tell him my little tale of woe I'm not such a bad fellow——'

Mr Cunningham intervened promptly

"We'll all renounce the devil," he said, "together, not forgetting his works and pomps "

"Get behind me, Satan!" said Mr Fogarty, laughing and looking at the others

Mr Power said nothing He felt completely out-generalled But a pleased expression flickered across his face

"All we have to do," said Mr Cunningham, "is to stand up with lighted candles in our hands and renew our baptismal vows "

"O, don't forget the candle, Tom," said Mr M'Coy "whatever you do "

"What?" said Mr Kernan "Must I have a candle?"

"O yes," said Mr Cunningham

"No, damn it all," said Mr Kernan sensibly "I draw the line there I'll do the job right enough I'll do the retreat business and confession, and all that business But no candles! No, damn it all I bar the candles!"

He shook his head with farcical gravity

"Listen to that!" said his wife

"I bar the candles," said Mr Kernan, conscious of having created an effect on his audience and continuing to shake his head to and fro "I bar the magic-lantern business "

Everyone laughed heartily

"There's a nice Catholic for you!" said his wife

"No candles!" repeated Mr Kernan obdurately "That's off!"

The transept of the Jesuit Church in Gardiner Street was almost full, and still at every moment gentlemen entered from the side door and, directed by the lay-brother, walked on tiptoe along the aisles until they found seating accommodation. The gentlemen were all well dressed and orderly. The light of the lamps of the church fell upon an assembly of black clothes and white collars, relieved here and there by tweeds, on dark mottled pillars of green marble and on lugubrious canvases. The gentlemen sat in the benches, having hitched their trousers slightly above their knees and laid their hats in security. They sat well back and gazed formally at the distant speck of red light which was suspended before the high altar.

In one of the benches near the pulpit sat Mr Cunningham and Mr Kernan. In the bench behind sat Mr M'Coy alone and in the bench behind him sat Mr Power and Mr Fogarty. Mr M'Coy had tried unsuccessfully to find a place in the bench with the others, and, when the party had settled down in the form of a quincunx, he had tried unsuccessfully to make comic remarks. As these had not been well received, he had desisted. Even he was sensible of the decorous atmosphere and even he began to respond to the religious stimulus. In a whisper, Mr Cunningham drew Mr Kernan's attention to Mr Harford, the moneylender, who sat some distance off, and to Mr Fanning, the registration agent and mavor maker of the city, who was sitting immediately under the pulpit beside one of the newly elected councillors of the ward. To the right sat old Michael Grimes, the owner of three pawnbroker's shops and Dan Hogan's nephew, who was up for the job in the Town Clerk's office. Farther in front sat Mr Hendrick, the chief reporter of *The Freeman's Journal* and poor O'Carroll, an old friend of Mr Kernan's, who had been at one time a considerable commercial figure. Gradually, as he recognised familiar faces, Mr Kernan began to feel more at home. His hat, which had been rehabilitated by his wife, rested upon his knees. Once or twice he pulled down his cuffs with one hand while he held the brim of his hat lightly, but firmly, with the other hand.

A powerful-looking figure, the upper part of which was draped with a white surplice, was observed to be struggling up into the pulpit. Simultaneously the congregation unsettled, produced handkerchiefs and knelt upon them with care. Mr Kernan followed the general example. The priest's figure now stood upright in the pulpit, two-thirds of its bulk, crowned by a massive red face, appearing above the balustrade.

Father Purdon knelt down, turned towards the red speck of light and covering his face with his hands, prayed. After an interval, he uncovered his face and rose. The congregation rose also and settled again on its benches. Mr Kernan restored his hat to its original position on his knee and presented an attentive face to the preacher. The preacher turned back each wide sleeve of his surplice with an elaborate large gesture and slowly surveyed the array of faces. Then he said

*'For the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light Wherefore make unto yourselves friends out of the mammon of iniquity so that when you die they may receive you into everlasting dwellings*

Father Purdon developed the text with resonant assurance. It was one of the most difficult texts in all the Scriptures, he said, to interpret properly. It was a text which might seem to the casual observer at variance with the lofty morality elsewhere preached by Jesus Christ. But, he told his hearers, the text had seemed to him specially adapted for the guidance of those whose lot it was to lead the life of the world and who yet wished to lead that life not in the manner of worldlings. It was a text for business men and professional men. Jesus Christ, with His divine understanding of every cranny of our human nature, understood that all men were not called to the religious life, that by far the vast majority were forced to live in the world, and, to a certain extent, for the world. And in this sentence He designed to give them a word of counsel, setting before them as exemplars in the religious life those very worshippers of Mammon who were of all men the least solicitous in matters religious.

He told his hearers that he was there that evening for no terrifying, no extravagant purpose, but as a man of the world speaking to his fellow-men. He came to speak to business men and he would speak to them in a businesslike way. If he might use the metaphor, he said, he was their spiritual accountant, and he wished each and every one of his hearers to open his books, the books of his spiritual life, and see if they tallied accurately with conscience.

Jesus Christ was not a hard taskmaster. He understood our little failings, understood the weaknesses of our poor fallen nature, understood the temptations of this life. We might have had, we all had from time to time our temptations. We might have, we all had, our failings. But one thing only, he said, he would ask of his hearers. And that was to be straight and manly with God. If their accounts tallied in every point to say

"Well, I have verified my accounts. I find all well."

But if, as might happen, there were some discrepancies, to admit the truth, to be frank and say like a man

"Well, I have looked into my accounts. I find this wrong and this wrong. But, with God's grace, I will rectify this and this. I will set right my accounts."

Powerhouse is playing!

He's here on tour from the city—"Powerhouse and His Keyboard"—"Powerhouse and His Tasmanians"—think of the things he calls himself! There's no one in the world like him. You can't tell what he is. "Nigger man"?—he looks more Asiatic, monkey, Jewish, Babylonian, Peruvian, fanatic, devil. He has pale gray eyes, heavy lids, maybe horny like a lizard's, but big glowing eyes when they're open. He has African feet of the greatest size, stomping, both together, on each side of the pedals. He's not coal black—beverage colored—looks like a preacher when his mouth is shut, but then it opens—vast and obscene. And his mouth is going every minute like a monkey's when it looks for something. Improvising, coming on a light and childish melody—*smooch*—he loves it with his mouth.

Is it possible that he could be this! When you have him there performing for you, that's what you feel. You know people on a stage—and people of a darker race—so likely to be marvelous, frightening.

This is a white dance. Powerhouse is not a show-off like the Harlem boys, not drunk, not crazy—he's in a trance, he's a person of joy, a fanatic. He listens as much as he performs, a look of hideous, powerful rapture on his face. Big arched eyebrows that never stop traveling, like a Jew's—wandering-Jew eyebrows. When he plays he beats down piano and seat and wears them away. He is in motion every moment—what could be more obscene? There he is with his great head, fat stomach, and little round piston legs, and long yellow-sectioned strong big fingers, at rest about the size of bananas. Of course you know how he sounds—you've heard him on records—but still you need to see him. He's going all the time, like skating around the skating rink or rowing a boat. It makes everybody crowd around, here in this shadowless steel-trussed hall with the rose-like posters of Nelson Eddy and the testimonial for the mind-reading horse in handwriting magnified five hundred times. Then all quietly he lays his finger on a key with the promise and serenity of a sibyl touching the book.

Powerhouse is so monstrous he sends everybody into oblivion. When any group, any performers, come to town, don't people always come out and hover near, leaning inward about them, to learn what it is? What is it?

*From A CURTAIN OF GREEN AND OTHER STORIES by Eudora Welty  
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Company Inc.*



Listen Remember how it was with the acrobats Watch them carefully, hear the least word, especially what they say to one another, in another language—don't let them escape you, it's the only time for hallucination, the last time They can't stay They'll be somewhere else this time tomorrow

Powerhouse has as much as possible done by signals Everybody, laughing as if to hide a weakness, will sooner or later hand him up a written request Powerhouse reads each one, studying with a secret face that is the face which looks like a mask—anybody's, there is a moment when he makes a decision Then a light slides under his eyelids, and he says, 92' or some combination of figures—never a name Before a number the band is all frantic, misbehaving, pushing, like children in a schoolroom, and he is the teacher getting silence His hands over the keys he says sternly "You-all ready? You-all ready to do some serious walking?"—waits—then, STAMP Quiet STAMP, for the second time This is absolute Then a set of rhythmic kicks against the floor to communicate the tempo Then, O Lord! say the distended eyes from beyond the boundary of the trumpets, Hello and good-bye, and they are all down the first note like a waterfall

This note marks the end of any known discipline Powerhouse seems to abandon them all—he himself seems lost—down in the song, yelling up like somebody in a whirlpool—not guiding them—hailing them only But he knows, really He cries out, but he must know exactly 'Mercy!

What I say! Yeah!" And then drifting, listening—Where that skin beater?"—wanting drums, and starting up and pouring it out in the greatest delight and brutality On the sweet pieces such a leer for everybody! He looks down so benevolently upon all our faces and whispers the lyrics to us And if you could hear him at this moment on Marie, the Dawn is Breaking"! He's going up the keyboard with a few fingers in some very derogatory triplet-routine, he gets higher and higher, and then he looks over the end of the piano, as if over a cliff But not in a show-off way—the song makes him do it

He loves the way they all play, too—all those next to him The first section of the band is all studious, wearing glasses, every one—they don't count Only those playing around Powerhouse are the real ones He has a bass fiddler from Vicksburg, black as pitch, named Valentine, who plays with his eyes shut and talking to himself, very young Powerhouse has to keep encouraging him "Go on, go on, give it up, bring it on out there! When you heard him like that on records, did you know he was really pleading?

He calls Valentine out to take a solo

"What you going to play?" Powerhouse looks out kindly from behind the piano, he opens his mouth and shows his tongue, listening

Valentine looks down, drawing against his instrument, and says without a lip movement, "Honeysuckle Rose"

He has a clarinet player named Little Brother, and loves to listen to anything he does He'll smile and say, 'Beautiful' Little Brother takes a step forward when he plays and stands at the very front, with the whites

of his eyes like fishes swimming Once when he played a low note, Powerhouse muttered a dirty praise, "He went clear downstairs to get that one!"

After a long time, he holds up the number of fingers to tell the band how many choruses still to go—usually five He keeps his directions down to signals

It's a bad night outside It's a white dance, and nobody dances, except a few straggling jitterbugs and two elderly couples Everybody just stands around the band and watches Powerhouse Sometimes they steal glances at one another, as if to say, Of course, you know how it is with *them*—Negroes—band leaders—they would play the same way, giving all they've got, for an audience of one When somebody, no matter who, gives everything, it makes people feel ashamed for him

Late at night they play the one waltz they will ever consent to play—by request, "Pagan Love Song" Powerhouse's head rolls and sinks like a weight between his waving shoulders He groans, and his fingers drag into the keys heavily, holding on to the notes, retrieving It is a sad song

"You know what happened to me?" says Powerhouse

Valentine hums a response, dreaming at the bass

"I got a telegram my wife is dead," says Powerhouse, with wandering fingers

'Uh-huh?'

His mouth gathers and forms a barbarous O while his fingers walk up straight, unwillingly, three octaves

"Gypsy? Why how come her to die, didn't you just phone her up in the night last night long distance?"

'Telegram say—here the words Your wife is dead' He puts 4/4 over the 3/4

"Not but four words?" This is the drummer, an unpopular boy named Scoot, a disbelieving maniac

Powerhouse is shaking his vast cheeks "What the hell was she trying to do? What was she up to?"

"What name has it got signed, if you got a telegram?" Scoot is spitting away with those wire brushes

Little Brother, the clarinet player, who cannot now speak, glares and tilts back

"Uranus Knockwood is the name signed" Powerhouse lifts his eyes open "Ever heard of him?" A bubble shoots out on his lip like a plate on a counter

Valentine is beating slowly on with his palm and scratching the strings with his long blue nails He is fond of a waltz, Powerhouse interrupts him

'I don't know him Don't know who he is' Valentine shakes his head with the closed eyes

'Say it again'

'Uranus Knockwood'

"That ain't Lenox Avenue"

"It ain't Broadway "

"Ain't ever seen it wrote out in any print, even for horse racing "

"Hell, that's on a star, boy, ain't it?" Crash of the cymbals

"What the hell was she up to?" Powerhouse shudders "Tell me, tell me, tell me " He makes triplets, and begins a new chorus He holds three fingers up

"You say you got a telegram " This is Valentine, patient and sleepy, beginning again

Powerhouse is elaborate "Yas, the time I go out, go way downstairs along a long cor-ri-dor to where they puts us coming back along the cor-ri-dor steps out and hands me a telegram Your wife is dead "

"Gypsy?" The drummer like a spider over his drums

"Aaaaaaaa!" shouts Powerhouse, flinging out both powerful arms for three whole beats to flex his muscles, then kneading a dough of bass notes His eyes glitter He plays the piano like a drum sometimes—why not?

"Gypsy? Such a dancer?"

"Why you don't hear it straight from your agent? Why it ain't come from headquarters? What you been doing, getting telegrams in the cor-ri-dor, signed nobody?"

They all laugh End of that chorus

"What time is it?" Powerhouse calls "What the hell place is this? Where is my watch and chain?"

"I hang it on you," whimpers Valentine "It still there "

There it rides on Powerhouse's great stomach, down where he can never see it

"Sure did hear some clock striking twelve while ago Must be *midnight*

"It going to be intermission," Powerhouse declares, lifting up his finger with the signet ring

He draws the chorus to an end He pulls a big Northern hotel towel out of the deep pocket in his vast, special-cut tux pants and pushes his forehead into it

"If she went and killed herself!" he says with a hidden face "If she up and jumped out that window!" He gets to his feet, turning vaguely, wearing the towel on his head

"Ha, ha!"

"Sheik, sheik!"

"She wouldn't do that " Little Brother sets down his clarinet like a precious vase, and speaks He still looks like an East Indian queen, implacable, divine, and full of snakes "You ain't going to expect people doing what they says over long distance "

"Come on!" roars Powerhouse He is already at the back door, he has pulled it wide open, and with a wild, gathered-up face is smelling the terrible night

Powerhouse, Valentine, Scoot and Little Brother step outside into the drenching rain

"Well, they emptying buckets," says Powerhouse in a mollified voice On the street he holds his hands out and turns up the blanched palms like sieves

A hundred dark, ragged, silent, delighted Negroes have come around from under the eaves of the hall, and follow wherever they go

'Watch out Little Brother don't shrink,' says Powerhouse "You just the right size now, clarinet don't suck you in You got a dry throat, Little Brother, you in the desert?" He reaches into the pocket and pulls out a paper of mints "Now hold 'em in your mouth—don't chew 'em I don't carry around nothing without limit"

"Go in that joint and have beer," says Scoot, who walks ahead

"Beer? Beer? You know what beer is? What do they say is beer? What's beer? Where I been?"

'Down yonder where it say World Cafe—that do' They are in Negrotown now

Valentine patters over and holds open a screen door warped like a sea shell, bitter in the wet, and they walk in, stained darker with the rain and leaving footprints Inside, sheltered dry smells stand like screens around a table covered with a red-checkered cloth, in the center of which flies hang onto an obelisk-shaped ketchup bottle The midnight walls are checkered again with admonishing "Not Responsible" signs and blackfigured, smoky calendars It is a waiting, silent, limp room There is a burned-out-looking nickelodeon and right beside it a long-necked wall instrument labeled "Business Phone, Don't Keep Talking" Circled phone numbers are written up everywhere There is a worn-out peacock feather hanging by a thread to an old, thin, pink, exposed light bulb, where it slowly turns around and around, whoever breathes

A waitress watches

"Come here, living statue, and get all this big order of beer we fixing to give"

'Never seen you before anywhere' The waitress moves and comes forward and slowly shows little gold leaves and tendrils over her teeth She shoves up her shoulders and breasts "How I going to know who you might be? Robbers? Coming in out of the black of night right at midnight, setting down so big at my table?"

"Boogers," says Powerhouse, his eyes opening lazily as in a cave

The girl screams delicately with pleasure O Lord, she likes talk and scares

"Where you going to find enough beer to put out on this here table?"

She runs to the kitchen with bent elbows and sliding steps

"Here's a million nickels," says Powerhouse, pulling his hand out of his pocket and sprinkling coins out, all but the last one, which he makes vanish like a magician

Valentine and Scoot take the money over to the nickelodeon, which looks as battered as a slot machine, and read all the names of the records out loud

"Whose 'Tuxedo Junction'?" asks Powerhouse

"You know whose"

"Nickelodeon, I request you please to play 'Empty Bed Blues' and let Bessie Smith sing"

Silence they hold it like a measure

"Bring me all those nickels on back here," says Powerhouse "Look at that! What you tell me the name of this place?"

"White dance, week night, raining, Alligator, Mississippi, long ways from home "

"Uh-huh "

"Sent for You Yesterday and Here You Come Today" plays

The waitress, setting the tray of beer down on a back table, comes up taut and apprehensive as a hen 'Says in the kitchen, back there putting their eyes to little hole peeping out, that you is Mr Powerhouse They knows from a picture they seen "

"They seeing right tonight, that is him," says Little Brother

"You him?"

"That is him in the flesh," says Scoot

"Does you wish to touch him?" asks Valentine "Because he don't bite "

"You passing through?"

"Now you got everything right "

She waits like a drop, hands languishing together in front

"Little-Bit, ain't you going to bring the beer?"

She brings it, and goes behind the cash register and smiles, turning different ways The little fillet of gold in her mouth is gleaming

"The Mississippi River's here," she says once

Now all the watching Negroes press in gently and bright-eyed through the door, as many as can get in One is a little boy in a straw sombrero which has been coated with aluminum paint all over

Powerhouse, Valentine, Scoot and Little Brother drink beer, and their eyelids come together like curtains The wall and the rain and the humble beautiful waitress waiting on them and the other Negroes watching enclose them

"Listen!" whispers Powerhouse, looking into the ketchup bottle and slowly spreading his performer's hand over the damp, wrinkling cloth with the red squares "Listen how it is My wife gets missing me Gypsy She goes to the window She looks out and sees you know what Street Sign saying Hotel People walking Somebody looks up Old man She looks down, out the window Well? Sssst! Plooev! What she do? Jump out and bust her brains all over the world "

He opens his eyes

"That's it," agrees Valentine "You gets a telegram "

"Sure she misses you," Little Brother adds

"No, it's night time " How softly he tells them! 'Sure It's the night time She say, What do I hear? Footsteps walking up the hall? That him? Footsteps go on off It's not me I'm in Alligator, Mississippi, she's crazy Shaking all over Listens till her ears and all grow out like old music-box horns but still she can't hear a thing She says, All right! I'll jump out the window then Got on her nightgown I know that nightgown, and her thinking there Says, Ho hum, all right, and jumps out the window Is she mad at me? Is she crazy! She don't leave *nothing* behind her!"

"Ya! Ha!"

"Brains and insides everywhere, Lord, Lord "

All the watching Negroes stir in their delight, and to their higher delight he says affectionately, "Listen! Rats in here "

"That must be the way, boss "

"Only, naw, Powerhouse, that ain't true That sound too *bad* '

"Does? I even know who finds her," cries Powerhouse "That no-good pussyfooted crooning creeper, that creeper that follow around after me, coming up like weeds behind me, following around after me everything I do and messing around on the trail I leave Bets my numbers, sings my songs, gets close to my agent like a Betsybug, when I going out he just coming in I got him now! I got my eye on him "

' Know who he is? "

Why, it's that old Uranus Knockwood! "

' Ya! Ha! "

' Yeah, and he coming now, he going to find Gypsy There he is, coming around that corner, and Gypsy kadoodling down, oh-oh, watch out! *Ssssst! Plooev!* See, there she is in her little old nightgown, and her insides and brains all scattered round "

A sigh fills the room

"Hush about her brains Hush about her insides "

' Ya! Ha! You talking about her brains and insides—old Uranus Knockwood ' says Powerhouse, "look down and say Jesus! He say, Look here what I'm walking round in! "

They all burst into halloos of laughter Powerhouse's face looks like a big hot iron stove

' Why, he picks her up and carries her off! " he says

' Ya! Ha! "

' Carries her *back* around the corner " "

Oh, Powerhouse! "

"You know him "

' Uranus Knockwood! "

' Yeahhh! "

He take our wives when we gone! "

He come in when we goes out! ' "

' Uh-huh! "

"He go out when we comes in! "

' Yeahhh! "

' He standing behind the door! "

' Old Uranus Knockwood "

You know him "

Middle-size man "

' Wears a hat "

"That s him "

Everybody in the room moans with pleasure The little boy in the fine silver hat opens a paper and divides out a jelly roll among his followers

And out of the breathless ring somebody moves forward like a slave, leading a great logy Negro with bursting eyes, and says, "This here is Sugar-Stick Thompson, that dove down to the bottom of July Creek and

pulled up all those drowned white people fall out of a boat Last summer, pulled up fourteen "

"Hello," says Powerhouse, turning and looking around at them all with his great daring face until they nearly suffocate

Sugar-Stuck, their instrument, cannot speak, he can only look back at the others

"Can't even swim Done it by holding his breath," says the fellow with the hero

Powerhouse looks at him seekingly

"I his half brother," the fellow puts in

They step back

"Gypsy say," Powerhouse rumbles gently again, looking at *them*,  
 "What is the use? I'm gonna jump out so far—so far ' Ssssst—'

"Don't, boss, don't do it again," says Little Brother

"It's awful," says the waitress "I hates that Mr Knockwoods All that the truth?"

"Want to see the telegram I got from him?" Powerhouse's hand goes to the vast pocket

"Now wait, now wait, boss " They all watch him

"It must be the real truth," says the waitress, sucking in her lower lip, her luminous eyes turning sadly, seeking the windows

"No, babe, it ain't the truth " His eyebrows fly up, and he begins to whisper to her out of his vast oven mouth His hand stays in his pocket "Truth is something worse, I ain't said what, yet It's something hasn't come to me, but I ain't saying it won't And when it does, then want me to tell you?" He sniffs all at once, his eyes come open and turn up, almost too far He is dreamily smiling

"Don't, boss, don't, Powerhouse!"

"Oh!" the waitress screams

"Go on git out of here!" bellows Powerhouse, taking his hand out of his pocket and clapping after her red dress

The ring of watchers breaks and falls away

'Look at that! Intermission is up," says Powerhouse

He folds money under a glass, and after they go out, Valentine leans back in and drops a nickel in the nickelodeon behind them, and it lights up and begins to play "The Goona Goo " The feather dangles still

"Take a telegram!" Powerhouse shouts suddenly up into the rain over the street "Take a answer Now what was that name?"

They get a little tired

"Uranus Knockwood "

"You ought to know "

"Yas? Spell it to me "

They spell it all the ways it could be spelled It puts them in a wonderful humor

"Here's the answer I got it right here 'What in the hell you talking about? Don't make any difference I gotcha ' Name signed Powerhouse"

"That going to reach him, Powerhouse?" Valentine speaks in a maternal voice

"Yas, yas "

All hushing, following him up the dark street at a distance, like old rained-on black ghosts, the Negroes are afraid they will die laughing

Powerhouse throws back his vast head into the steaming rain, and a look of hopeful desire seems to blow somehow like a vapor from his own dilated nostrils over his face and bring a mist to his eyes

"Reach him and come out the other side "

"That's it, Powerhouse, that's it You got him now "

Powerhouse lets out a long sigh

"But ain't you going back there to call up Gypsy long distance, the way you did last night in that other place? I seen a telephone Just to see if she there at home?"

There is a measure of silence That is one crazy drummer that's going to get his neck broken some day

"No," growls Powerhouse "No! How many thousand times tonight I got to say No?"

He holds up his arm in the rain

"You sure-enough unroll your voice some night, it about reach up yonder to her," says Little Brother, dismayed

They go on up the street, shaking the rain off and on them like birds

Back in the dance hall, they play "San" (99) The jitterbugs start up like windmills stationed over the floor, and in their orbits—one circle, another, a long stretch and a zigzag—dance the elderly couples with old smoothness, undisturbed and stately

When Powerhouse first came back from intermission, no doubt full of beer, they said, he got the band tuned up again in his own way He didn't strike the piano keys for pitch—he simply opened his mouth and gave falsetto howls—in A, D and so on—they tuned by him Then he took hold of the piano, as if he saw it for the first time in his life, and tested it for strength, hit it down in the bass, played an octave with his elbow, lifted the top, looked inside, and leaned against it with all his might He sat down and played it for a few minutes with outrageous force and got it under his power—a bass deep and coarse as a sea net—then produced something glimmering and fragile, and smiled And who could ever remember any of the things he says? They are just inspired remarks that roll out of his mouth like smoke

They've requested "Somebody Loves Me," and he's already done twelve or fourteen choruses, piling them up nobody knows how, and it will be a wonder if he ever gets through Now and then he calls and shouts, " 'Somebody loves me! Somebody loves me, I wonder who! ' " His mouth gets to be nothing but a volcano "I wonder who!"

"Maybe " He uses all his right hand on a trill

' Maybe ' He pulls back his spread fingers and looks out upon the place where he is A vast, impersonal and yet furious grimace transfigures his wet face

" Maybe it's you!"



It was late and every one had left the cafe except an old man who sat in the shadow the leaves of the tree made against the electric light. In the day time the street was dusty, but at night the dew settled the dust and the old man liked to sit late because he was deaf and now at night it was quiet and he felt the difference. The two waiters inside the cafe knew that the old man was a little drunk, and while he was a good client they knew that if he became too drunk he would leave without paying, so they kept watch on him.

"Last week he tried to commit suicide," one waiter said.

"Why?"

"He was in despair."

"What about?"

"Nothing."

"How do you know it was nothing?"

"He has plenty of money."

They sat together at a table that was close against the wall near the door of the cafe and looked at the terrace where the tables were all empty except where the old man sat in the shadow of the leaves of the tree that moved slightly in the wind. A girl and a soldier went by in the street. The street light shone on the brass number on his collar. The girl wore no head covering and hurried beside him.

"The guard will pick him up," one waiter said.

"What does it matter if he gets what he's after?"

"He had better get off the street now. The guard will get him. They went by five minutes ago."

The old man sitting in the shadow rapped on his saucer with his glass. The younger waiter went over to him.

"What do you want?"

The old man looked at him. "Another brandy," he said.

"You'll be drunk," the waiter said. The old man looked at him. The waiter went away.

"He'll stay all night," he said to his colleague. "I'm sleepy now. I never get into bed before three o'clock. He should have killed himself last week."

The waiter took the brandy bottle and another saucer from the counter.

inside the cafe and marched out to the old man's table. He put down the saucer and poured the glass full of brandy.

'You should have killed yourself last week,' he said to the deaf man. The old man motioned with his finger. 'A little more,' he said. The waiter poured on into the glass so that the brandy slopped over and ran down the stem into the top saucer of the pile. 'Thank you,' the old man said. The waiter took the bottle back inside the cafe. He sat down at the table with his colleague again.

'He's drunk now,' he said.

'He's drunk every night.'

'What did he want to kill himself for?'

'How should I know?'

'How did he do it?'

'He hung himself with a rope.'

'Who cut him down?'

'His niece.'

'Why did they do it?'

'Fear for his soul.'

'How much money has he got?'

'He's got plenty.'

'He must be eighty years old.'

'Anyway I should say he was eighty.'

'I wish he would go home. I never get to bed before three o'clock. What kind of hour is that to go to bed?'

He stays up because he likes it.'

He's lonely. I'm not lonely. I have a wife waiting in bed for me.'

'He had a wife once too.'

'A wife would be no good to him now.'

You can't tell. He might be better with a wife.'

'His niece looks after him.'

I know. You said she cut him down.'

'I wouldn't want to be that old. An old man is a nasty thing.'

'Not always. This old man is clean. He drinks without spilling. Even now, drunk. Look at him.'

I don't want to look at him. I wish he would go home. He has no regard for those who must work.'

The old man looked from his glass across the square, then over at the waiters.

'Another brandy,' he said, pointing to his glass. The waiter who was in a hurry came over.

'Finished,' he said, speaking with that omission of syntax stupid people employ when talking to drunken people or foreigners. No more tonight. Close now.'

'Another,' said the old man.

'No. Finished.' The waiter wiped the edge of the table with a towel and shook his head.

The old man stood up, slowly counted the saucers, took a leather coin purse from his pocket and paid for the drinks, leaving half a peseta tip.

The waiter watched him go down the street, a very old man walking unsteadily but with dignity

"Why didn't you let him stay and drink?" the unhurried waiter asked  
They were putting up the shutters "It is not half-past two "

"I want to go home to bed "

"What is an hour?"

"More to me than to him "

"An hour is the same "

"You talk like an old man yourself He can buy a bottle and drink at home "

"It's not the same "

"No, it is not," agreed the waiter with a wife He did not wish to be unjust He was only in a hurry

"And you? You have no fear of going home before your usual hour?"

"Are you trying to insult me?"

"No, hombre, only to make a joke "

"No," the waiter who was in a hurry said, rising from pulling down the metal shutters "I have confidence I am all confidence "

'You have youth, confidence, and a job,' the older waiter said "You have everything "

"And what do you lack?"

"Everything but work "

"You have everything I have "

"No I have never had confidence and I am not young "

"Come on Stop talking nonsense and lock up "

"I am of those who like to stay late at the cafe " the older waiter said  
"With all those who do not want to go to bed With all those who need a light for the night "

"I want to go home and into bed "

"We are of two different kinds," the older waiter said He was now dressed to go home "It is not only a question of youth and confidence although those things are very beautiful Each night I am reluctant to close up because there may be some one who needs the cafe "

"Hombre, there are bodegas open all night long "

"You do not understand This is a clean and pleasant cafe It is well lighted The light is very good and also, now, there are shadows of the leaves "

"Good night," said the younger waiter

'Good night,' the other said Turning off the electric light he continued the conversation with himself It is the light of course but it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant You do not want music Certainly you do not want music Nor can you stand before a bar with dignity although that is all that is provided for these hours What did he fear? It was not fear or dread It was a nothing that he knew too well It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y pues nada Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada

as it is in nada Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada, pues nada Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee He smiled and stood before a bar with a shining steam pressure coffee machine

"What's yours?" asked the barman

"Nada "

"Otro loco mas," said the barman and turned away

"A little cup," said the waiter

The barman poured it for him

"The light is very bright and pleasant but the bar is unpolished," the waiter said

The barman looked at him but did not answer It was too late at night for conversation

"You want another copita?" the barman asked

"No, thank you," said the waiter and went out He disliked bars and bodegas A clean, well-lighted cafe was a very different thing Now, without thinking further, he would go home to his room He would lie in the bed and finally, with daylight, he would go to sleep After all, he said to himself, it is probably only insomnia Many must have it

It was a Sunday morning in the very height of spring Georg Bendemann, a young merchant, was sitting in his own room on the first floor of one of a long row of small, ramshackle houses stretching beside the river which were scarcely distinguishable from each other except in height and coloring. He had just finished a letter to an old friend of his who was now living abroad, had put it into its envelope in a slow and dreamy fashion, and with his elbows propped on the writing table was gazing out of the window at the river, the bridge and the hills on the farther bank with their tender green.

He was thinking about his friend, who had actually run away to Russia some years before, being dissatisfied with his prospects at home. Now he was carrying on a business in St. Petersburg, which had flourished to begin with but had long been going downhill, as he always complained on his increasingly rare visits. So he was wearing himself out to no purpose in a foreign country, the unfamiliar full beard he wore did not quite conceal the face Georg had known so well since childhood, and his skin was growing so yellow as to indicate some latent disease. By his own account he had no regular connection with the colony of his fellow countrymen out there and almost no social intercourse with Russian families, so that he was resigning himself to becoming a permanent bachelor.

What could one write to such a man, who had obviously run off the rails, a man one could be sorry for but could not help? Should one advise him to come home, to transplant himself and take up his old friendships again—there was nothing to hinder him—and in general to rely on the help of his friends? But that was as good as telling him, and the more kindly the more offensively, that all his efforts hitherto had miscarried, that he should finally give up, come back home, and be gaped at by everyone as a returned prodigal, that only his friends knew what was what and that he himself was just a big child who should do what his successful and home-keeping friends prescribed. And was it certain, besides that all the pain one would have to inflict on him would achieve its object? Perhaps it would not even be possible to get him to come home at all—he said himself that he was now out of touch with commerce in his native country—and then he would still be left an alien in a foreign land embittered by his friends' advice and more than ever estranged from them. But if he did

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follow their advice and then didn't fit in at home—not out of malice, of course, but through force of circumstances—couldn't get on with his friends or without them, felt humiliated, couldn't be said to have either friends or a country of his own any longer, wouldn't it have been better for him to stay abroad just as he was? Taking all this into account, how could one be sure that he would make a success of life at home?

For such reasons, supposing one wanted to keep up correspondence with him, one could not send him any real news such as could frankly be told to the most distant acquaintance. It was more than three years since his last visit and for this he offered the lame excuse that the political situation in Russia was too uncertain, which apparently would not permit even the briefest absence of a small business man while it allowed hundreds of thousands of Russians to travel peacefully abroad. But during these three years Georg's own position in life had changed a lot. Two years ago his mother had died, since when he and his father had shared the household together, and his friend had of course been informed of that and had expressed his sympathy in a letter phrased so dryly that the grief caused by such an event, one had to conclude, could not be realized in a distant country. Since that time, however, Georg had applied himself with greater determination to the business as well as to everything else.

Perhaps during his mother's lifetime his father's insistence on having everything his own way in the business had hindered him from developing any real activity of his own, perhaps since her death his father had become less aggressive although he was still active in the business, perhaps it was mostly due to an accidental run of good fortune—which was very probable indeed—but at any rate during those two years the business had developed in a most unexpected way, the staff had had to be doubled, the turnover was five times as great, no doubt about it, further progress lay just ahead.

But Georg's friend had no inkling of this improvement. In earlier years, perhaps for the first time in that letter of condolence, he had tried to persuade Georg to emigrate to Russia and had enlarged upon the prospects of success for precisely Georg's branch of trade. The figures quoted were microscopic by comparison with the range of Georg's present operations. Yet he shrank from letting his friend know about his business success, and if he were to do it now retrospectively that certainly would look peculiar.

So Georg confined himself to giving his friend unimportant items of gossip such as rise at random in the memory when one is idly thinking things over on a quiet Sunday. All he desired was to leave undisturbed the idea of the home town which his friend must have built up to his own content during the long interval. And so it happened to Georg that three times in three fairly widely separated letters he had told his friend about the engagement of an unimportant man to an equally unimportant girl, until indeed, quite contrary to his intentions, his friend began to show some interest in this notable event.

Yet Georg preferred to write about things like these rather than to confess that he himself had got engaged a month ago to a Fraulein Frieda Brandenfeld, a girl from a well-to-do family. He often discussed this

friend of his with his fiancée and the peculiar relationship that had developed between them in their correspondence "So he won't be coming to our wedding," said she, "and yet I have a right to get to know all your friends" "I don't want to trouble him," answered Georg "Don't misunderstand me, he would probably come, at least I think so, but he would feel that his hand had been forced and he would be hurt, perhaps he would envy me and certainly he'd be discontented and without being able to do anything about his discontent he'd have to go away again alone Alone—do you know what that means?" "Yes, but may he not hear about our wedding in some other fashion?" "I can't prevent that, of course, but it's unlikely, considering the way he lives" "Since your friends are like that, Georg, you shouldn't ever have got engaged at all" "Well, we're both to blame for that, but I wouldn't have it any other way now" And when, breathing quickly under his kisses, she still brought out "All the same, I do feel upset," he thought it could not really involve him in trouble were he to send the news to his friend "That's the kind of man I am and he'll just have to take me as I am," he said to himself, "I can't cut myself to another pattern that might make a more suitable friend for him"

And in fact he did inform his friend, in the long letter he had been writing that Sunday morning, about his engagement, with these words "I have saved my best news to the end I have got engaged to a Fraulein Frieda Brandenfeld, a girl from a well-to-do family, who only came to live here a long time after you went away, so that you're hardly likely to know her There will be time to tell you more about her later, for today let me just say that I am very happy and as between you and me the only difference in our relationship is that instead of a quite ordinary kind of friend you will now have in me a happy friend Besides that, you will acquire in my fiancée, who sends her warm greetings and will soon write you herself, a genuine friend of the opposite sex, which is not without importance to a bachelor I know that there are many reasons why you can't come to see us, but would not my wedding be precisely the right occasion for giving all obstacles the go-by? Still, however that may be, do just as seems good to you without regarding any interests but your own"

With this letter in his hand Georg had been sitting a long time at the writing table, his face turned towards the window He had barely acknowledged, with an absent smile, a greeting waved to him from the street by a passing acquaintance

At last he put the letter in his pocket and went out of his room across a small lobby into his father's room, which he had not entered for months There was in fact no need for him to enter it, since he saw his father daily at business and they took their midday meal together at an eating house, in the evening, it was true, each did as he pleased, yet even then, unless Georg—as mostly happened—went out with friends or, more recently, visited his fiancée, they always sat for a while, each with his newspaper, in their common sitting room

It surprised Georg how dark his father's room was even on this sunny morning So it was overshadowed as much as that by the high wall on the

other side of the narrow courtyard His father was sitting by the window in a corner hung with various mementoes of Georg's dead mother, reading a newspaper which he held to one side before his eyes in an attempt to overcome a defect of vision On the table stood the remains of his breakfast, not much of which seemed to have been eaten

"Ah, Georg," said his father, rising at once to meet him His heavy dressing gown swung open as he walked and the skirts of it fluttered round him—"My father is still a giant of a man," said Georg to himself

"It's unbearably dark here," he said aloud

"Yes, it's dark enough," answered his father

"And you've shut the window, too?"

"I prefer it like that"

"Well, it's quite warm outside," said Georg, as if continuing his previous remark, and sat down

His father cleared away the breakfast dishes and set them on a chest

"I really only wanted to tell you," went on Georg, who had been vacantly following the old man's movements, "that I am now sending the news of my engagement to St Petersburg" He drew the letter a little way from his pocket and let it drop back again

"To St Petersburg?" asked his father

"To my friend there," said Georg, trying to meet his father's eye—In business hours he's quite different, he was thinking How solidly he sits here with his arms crossed

"Oh, yes To your friend," said his father, with peculiar emphasis

"Well, you know, Father, that I wanted not to tell him about my engagement at first Out of consideration for him, that was the only reason You know yourself he's a difficult man I said to myself that someone else might tell him about my engagement, although he's such a solitary creature that that was hardly likely—I couldn't prevent that—but I wasn't ever going to tell him myself"

"And now you've changed your mind?" asked his father, laying his enormous newspaper on the window sill and on top of it his spectacles, which he covered with one hand

"Yes, I've been thinking it over If he's a good friend of mine, I said to myself, my being happily engaged should make him happy too And so I wouldn't put off telling him any longer But before I posted the letter I wanted to let you know"

"Georg," said his father, lengthening his toothless mouth, 'listen to me! You've come to me about this business, to talk it over with me No doubt that does you honor But it's nothing it's worse than nothing, if you don't tell me the whole truth I don't want to stir up matters that shouldn't be mentioned here Since the death of our dear mother certain things have been done that aren't right Maybe the time will come for mentioning them, and maybe sooner than we think There's many a thing in the business I'm not aware of, maybe it's not done behind my back—I'm not going to say that it's done behind my back—I'm not equal to things any longer My memory's failing, I haven't an eye for so many things any longer That's the course of nature in the first place, and in the second



place the death of our dear mother hit me harder than it did you —But since we're talking about it, about this letter, I beg you Georg, don't deceive me It's a trivial affair, it's hardly worth mentioning, so don't deceive me Do you really have this friend in St Petersburg?"

Georg rose in embarrassment "Never mind my friends A thousand friends wouldn't make up to me for my father Do you know what I think? You're not taking enough care of yourself But old age must be taken care of I can't do without you in the business, you know that very well, but if the business is going to undermine your health, I'm ready to close it down tomorrow forever And that won't do We'll have to make a change in your way of living But a radical change You sit here in the dark, and in the sitting room you would have plenty of light You just take a bite of breakfast instead of properly keeping up your strength You sit by a closed window, and the air would be so good for you No, Father! I'll get the doctor to come, and we'll follow his orders We'll change your room, you can move into the front room and I'll move in here You won't notice the change, all your things will be moved with you But there's time for all that later I'll put you to bed now for a little, I'm sure you need to rest Come, I'll help you to take off your things you'll see I can do it Or if you would rather go into the front room at once, you can lie down in my bed for the present That would be the most sensible thing '

Georg stood close beside his father, who had let his head with its unkempt white hair sink on his chest

"Georg," said his father in a low voice, without moving

Georg knelt down at once beside his father In the old man's weary face he saw the pupils, over-large, fixedly looking at him from the corners of the eyes

"You have a friend in St Petersburg You've always been a leg-puller and you haven't even shrunk from pulling my leg How could you have a friend out there! I can't believe it "

"Just think back a bit, Father," said Georg, lifting his father from the chair and slipping off his dressing gown as he stood feebly enough "it'll soon be three years since my friend came to see us last I remember that you used not to like him very much At least twice I kept you from seeing him, although he was actually sitting with me in my room I could quite well understand your dislike of him, my friend has his peculiarities But then, later, you got on with him very well I was proud because you listened to him and nodded and asked him questions If you think back you're bound to remember He used to tell us the most incredible stories of the Russian Revolution For instance, when he was on a business trip to Kiev and ran into a riot, and saw a priest on a balcony who cut a broad cross in blood on the palm of his hand and held the hand up and appealed to the mob You've told that story yourself once or twice since "

Meanwhile Georg had succeeded in lowering his father down again and carefully taking off the woollen drawers he wore over his linen underpants and his socks The not particularly clean appearance of this underwear made him reproach himself for having been neglectful It should have certainly been his duty to see that his father had clean changes of

underwear He had not yet explicitly discussed with his bride-to-be what arrangements should be made for his father in the future, for they had both of them silently taken it for granted that the old man would go on living alone in the old house But now he made a quick, firm decision to take him into his own future establishment It almost looked, on closer inspection, as if the care he meant to lavish on his father might come too late

He carried his father to bed in his arms It gave him a dreadful feeling to notice that while he took the few steps toward the bed the old man on his breast was playing with his watch chain He could not lay him down on the bed for a moment, so firmly did he hang on to the watch chain

But as soon as he was laid in bed, all seemed well He covered himself up and even drew the blankets farther than usual over his shoulders He looked up at Georg with a not unfriendly eye

'You begin to remember my friend, don't you?' asked Georg, giving him an encouraging nod

'Am I well covered up now?' asked his father, as if he were not able to see whether his feet were properly tucked in or not

"So you find it snug in bed already," said Georg, and tucked the blankets more closely around him

"Am I well covered up?" asked the father once more, seeming to be strangely intent upon the answer

Don't worry, you're well covered up "

No!' cried his father, cutting short the answer, threw the blankets off with a strength that sent them all flying in a moment and sprang erect in bed Only one hand lightly touched the ceiling to steady him

'You wanted to cover me up, I know, my young sprig, but I'm far from being covered up yet And even if this is the last strength I have it's enough for you, too much for you Of course I know your friend He would have been a son after my own heart That's why you've been playing him false all these years Why else? Do you think I haven't been sorry for him? And that's why you had to lock yourself up in your office—the Chief is busy, mustn't be disturbed—just so that you could write your lying little letters to Russia But thank goodness a father doesn't need to be taught how to see through his son And now that you thought you'd got him down, so far down that you could set your bottom on him and sit on him and he wouldn't move, then my fine son makes up his mind to get married!"

Georg stared at the bogey conjured up by his father His friend in St Petersburg, whom his father suddenly knew too well, touched his imagination as never before Lost in the vastness of Russia he saw him At the door of an empty, plundered warehouse he saw him Among the wreckage of his showcases, the slashed remnants of his wares, the falling gas brackets, he was just standing up Why, did he have to go so far away!

"But attend to me!" cried his father, and Georg almost distracted, ran towards the bed to take everything in, yet came to a stop halfway

"Because she lifted up her skirts," his father began to flute, "because she lifted her skirts like this, the nasty creature," and mimicking her he

lifted his shirt so high that one could see the scar on his thigh from his war wound, "because she lifted her skirts like this and this you made up to her, and in order to make free with her undisturbed you have disgraced your mother's memory, betrayed your friend and stuck your father into bed so that he can't move. But he can move, or can't he?"

And he stood up quite unsupported and kicked his legs out. His insight made him radiant.

Georg shrank into a corner, as far away from his father as possible. A long time ago he had firmly made up his mind to watch closely every least movement so that he should not be surprised by any indirect attack, a pounce from behind or above. At this moment he recalled this long-forgotten resolve and forgot it again, like a man drawing a short thread through the eye of a needle.

"But your friend hasn't been betrayed after all!" cried his father, emphasizing the point with stabs of his forefinger. "I've been representing him here on the spot."

"You comedian!" Georg could not resist the retort, realized at once the harm done and, his eyes starting in his head, bit his tongue back, only too late, till the pain made his knees give.

"Yes, of course I've been playing a comedy! A comedy! That's a good expression! What other comfort was left to a poor old widower? Tell me—and while you're answering me be you still my living son—what else was left to me, in my back room, plagued by a disloyal staff, old to the marrow of my bones? And my son strutting through the world, finishing off deals that I had prepared for him, bursting with triumphant glee and stalking away from his father with the closed face of a respectable business man! Do you think I didn't love you, I, from whom you are sprung?"

Now he'll lean forward, thought Georg. What if he topples and smashes himself! These words went hissing through his mind.

His father leaned forward but did not topple. Since Georg did not come any nearer, as he had expected, he straightened himself again.

"Stay where you are, I don't need you! You think you have strength enough to come over here and that you're only hanging back of your own accord. Don't be too sure! I am still much the stronger of us two. All by myself I might have had to give way, but your mother has given me so much of her strength that I've established a fine connection with your friend and I have your customers here in my pocket!"

"He has pockets even in his shirt!" said Georg to himself, and believed that with this remark he could make him an impossible figure for all the world. Only for a moment did he think so, since he kept on forgetting everything.

"Just take your bride on your arm and try getting in my way! I'll sweep her from your very side, you don't know how!"

Georg made a grimace of disbelief. His father only nodded, confirming the truth of his words, towards Georg's corner.

"How you amused me today, coming to ask me if you should tell your friend about your engagement. He knows it already, you stupid boy, he knows it all! I've been writing to him, for you forgot to take my writing

things away from me. That's why he hasn't been here for years, he knows everything a hundred times better than you do yourself, in his left hand he crumples your letters unopened while in his right hand he holds up my letters to read through!"

In his enthusiasm he waved his arm over his head "He knows everything a thousand times better!" he cried

"Ten thousand times!" said Georg, to make fun of his father, but in his very mouth the words turned into deadly earnest

"For years I've been waiting for you to come with some such question! Do you think I concern myself with anything else? Do you think I read my newspapers? Look!" and he threw Georg a newspaper sheet which he had somehow taken to bed with him. An old newspaper, with a name entirely unknown to Georg

"How long a time you've taken to grow up! Your mother had to die, she couldn't see the happy day, your friend is going to pieces in Russia, even three years ago he was yellow enough to be thrown away, and as for me, you see what condition I'm in. You have eyes in your head for that!"

So you've been lying in wait for me!" cried Georg

His father said pityingly, in an offhand manner "I suppose you wanted to say that sooner. But now it doesn't matter." And in a louder voice "So now you know what else there was in the world besides yourself, till now you've known only about yourself! An innocent child, yes, that you were truly—but still more truly have you been a devilish human being!—And therefore take note. I sentence you now to death by drowning!"

Georg felt himself urged from the room. The crash with which his father fell on the bed behind him was still in his ears as he fled. On the staircase, which he rushed down as if its steps were an inclined plane, he ran into his chairwoman on her way up to do the morning cleaning of the room.

"Jesus!" she cried and covered her face with her apron, but he was already gone. Out of the front door he rushed, across the roadway, driven towards the water. Aloudly he was grasping at the railings as a starving man clutches food. He swung himself over, like the distinguished gymnast he had once been in his youth, to his parents' pride. With weakening grip he was still holding on when he spied between the railings a motor-bus coming which would easily cover the noise of his fall, called in a low voice "Dear parents, I have always loved you, all the same," and let himself drop.

At this moment an unending stream of traffic was just going over the bridge

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[See the critical comments on this story in the Appendix.]

Gustave Aschenbach—or von Aschenbach, as he had been known officially since his fiftieth birthday—had set out alone from his house in Prince Regent Street, Munich, for an extended walk. It was a spring afternoon in that year of grace 19—, when Europe sat upon the anxious seat beneath a menace that hung over its head for months. Aschenbach had sought the open soon after tea. He was overwrought by a morning of hard, nerve-taxing work, work which had not ceased to exact his uttermost in the way of sustained concentration, conscientiousness, and tact, and after the noon meal found himself powerless to check the onward sweep of the productive mechanism within him, that *motus animi continuus* in which, according to Cicero, eloquence resides. He had sought but not found relaxation in sleep—though the wear and tear upon his system had come to make a daily nap more and more imperative—and now undertook a walk, in the hope that air and exercise might send him back refreshed to a good evening's work.

May had begun, and after weeks of cold and wet a mock summer had set in. The English Gardens, though in tenderest leaf, felt as sultry as in August and were full of vehicles and pedestrians near the city. But towards Aumeister the paths were solitary and still, and Aschenbach strolled thither, stopping awhile to watch the lively crowds in the restaurant garden with its fringe of carriages and cabs. Thence he took his homeward way outside the park and across the sunset fields. By the time he reached the North Cemetery, however, he felt tired, and a storm was brewing above Fohring, so he waited at the stopping-place for a tram to carry him back to the city.

He found the neighbourhood quite empty. Not a wagon in sight either on the paved Ungererstrasse, with its gleaming tram-lines stretching off towards Schwabing, nor on the Fohring highway. Nothing stirred behind the hedge in the stone-mason's yard, where crosses, monuments, and commemorative tablets made a supernumerary and untenanted graveyard opposite the real one. The mortuary chapel, a structure in Byzantine style, stood facing it, silent in the gleam of the ebbing day. Its façade was adorned with Greek crosses and tinted hieratic designs, and displayed a symmetrically arranged selection of scriptural texts in gilded letters, all of them with a bearing upon the future life, such as 'They are entering

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into the House of the Lord" and "May the Light Everlasting shine upon them." Aschenbach beguiled some minutes of his waiting with reading these formulas and letting his mind's eye lose itself in their mystical meaning. He was brought back to reality by the sight of a man standing in the portico, above the two apocalyptic beasts that guarded the staircase, and something not quite usual in this man's appearance gave his thoughts a fresh turn.

Whether he had come out of the hall through the bronze doors or mounted unnoticed from outside, it was impossible to tell. Aschenbach casually inclined to the first idea. He was of medium height, thin, beardless, and strikingly snub-nosed, he belonged to the red-haired type and possessed its milky, freckled skin. He was obviously not Bavarian, and the broad, straight-brimmed straw hat he had on even made him look distinctly exotic. True, he had the indigenous rucksack buckled on his back, wore a belted suit of yellowish woollen stuff, apparently frieze, and carried a grey mackintosh cape across his left forearm, which was propped against his waist. In his right hand, slantwise to the ground, he held an iron-shod stick, and braced himself against its crook, with his legs crossed. His chin was up, so that the Adam's apple looked very bald in the lean neck rising from the loose shirt, and he stood there sharply peering up into space out of colourless, red-lashed eyes, while two pronounced perpendicular furrows showed on his forehead in curious contrast to his little turned-up nose. Perhaps his heightened and heightening position helped out the impression Aschenbach received. At any rate, standing there as though at survey, the man had a bold and domineering, even a ruthless, air, and his lips completed the picture by seeming to curl back, either by reason of some deformity or else because he grimaced, being blinded by the sun in his face, they laid bare the long, white, glistening teeth to the gums.

Aschenbach's gaze, though unawares, had very likely been inquisitive and tactless, for he became suddenly conscious that the stranger was returning it, and indeed so directly, with such hostility, such plain intent to force the withdrawal of the other's eyes, that Aschenbach felt an unpleasant twinge and, turning his back, began to walk along the hedge, hastily resolving to give the man no further heed. He had forgotten him the next minute. Yet whether the pilgrim air the stranger wore kindled his fantasy or whether some other physical or psychical influence came in play, he could not tell, but he felt the most surprising consciousness of a widening of inward barriers, a kind of vaulting unrest, a youthfully ardent thirst for distant scenes—a feeling so lively and so new, or at least so long ago outgrown and forgot, that he stood there rooted to the spot, his eyes on the ground and his hands clasped behind him, exploring these sentiments of his, their bearing and scope.

True, what he felt was no more than a longing to travel, yet coming upon him with such suddenness and passion as to resemble a seizure, almost a hallucination. Desire projected itself visually, his fancy, not quite yet lulled since morning, imaged the marvels and terrors of the manifold earth. He saw. He beheld a landscape, a tropical marshland,

beneath a reeking sky, steaming, monstrous, rank—a kind of primeval wilderness-world of islands, morasses, and alluvial channels. Hairy palm-trunks rose near and far out of lush brakes of fern, out of bottoms of crass vegetation, fat, swollen, thick with incredible bloom. There were trees, misshapen as a dream, that dropped their naked roots straight through the air into the ground or into water that was stagnant and shadowy and glassy-green, where mammoth milk-white blossoms floated, and strange high-shouldered birds with curious bills stood gazing sidewise without sound or stir. Among the knotted joints of a bamboo thicket the eyes of a crouching tiger gleamed—and he felt his heart throb with terror, yet with a longing inexplicable. Then the vision vanished. Aschenbach, shaking his head, took up his march once more along the hedge of the stonemason's yard.

He had, at least ever since he commanded means to get about the world at will, regarded travel as a necessary evil, to be endured now and again willy-nilly for the sake of one's health. Too busy with the tasks imposed upon him by his own ego and the European soul, too laden with the care and duty to create, too preoccupied to be an amateur of the gay outer world, he had been content to know as much of the earth's surface as he could without stirring far outside his own sphere—had, indeed, never even been tempted to leave Europe. Now more than ever, since his life was on the wane, since he could no longer brush aside as fanciful his artist fear of not having done, of not being finished before the works ran down, he had confined himself to close range, had hardly stepped outside the charming city which he had made his home and the rude country house he had built in the mountains, whither he went to spend the rainy summers.

And so the new impulse which thus late and suddenly swept over him was speedily made to conform to the pattern of self-discipline he had followed from his youth up. He had meant to bring his work, for which he lived, to a certain point before leaving for the country, and the thought of a leisurely ramble across the globe, which should take him away from his desk for months, was too fantastic and upsetting to be seriously entertained. Yet the source of the unexpected contagion was known to him only too well. This yearning for new and distant scenes, this craving for freedom, release, forgetfulness—they were, he admitted to himself, an impulse towards flight, flight from the spot which was the duly theatre of a rigid, cold, and passionate service. That service he loved, had even almost come to love the enervating daily struggle between a proud, tenacious, well-tried will and this growing fatigue, which no one must suspect, nor the finished product betray by any faintest sign that his inspiration could ever flag or miss fire. On the other hand, it seemed the part of common sense not to span the bow too far, not to suppress summarily a need that so unequivocally asserted itself. He thought of his work, and the place where yesterday and again today he had been forced to lay it down, since it would not yield either to patient effort or a swift *coup de main*. Again and again he had tried to break or untie the knot—only to retire at last from the attack with a shiver of repugnance. Yet the difficulty was

actually not a great one, what sapped his strength was distaste for the task, betrayed by a fastidiousness he could no longer satisfy. In his youth, indeed, the nature and inmost essence of the literary gift had been, to him, this very scrupulosity, for it had bridled and tempered his sensibilities, knowing full well that feeling is prone to be content with easy gains and blithe half-perfection. So now, perhaps, feeling, thus tyrannized, avenged itself by leaving him, refusing from now on to carry and wing his art and taking away with it all the ecstasy he had known in form and expression. Not that he was doing bad work. So much, at least, the years had brought him, that at any moment he might feel tranquilly assured of mastery. But he got no joy of it—not though a nation paid it homage. To him it seemed his work had ceased to be marked by that fiery play of fancy which is the product of joy, and more, and more potently, than any intrinsic content forms in turn the joy of the receiving world. He dreaded the summer in the country, alone with the maid who prepared his food and the man who served him, dreaded to see the familiar mountain peaks and walls that would shut him up again with his heavy discontent. What he needed was a break, an interim existence, a means of passing time, other air and a new stock of blood, to make the summer tolerable and productive. Good then, he would go a journey. Not far—not all the way to the tigers. A night in a *wagon-lit*, three or four weeks of lotus-eating at some one of the gay world's playgrounds in the lovely south.

So ran his thoughts, while the clang of the electric tram drew nearer down the Ungererstrasse, and as he mounted the platform he decided to devote the evening to a study of maps and railway guides. Once in, he bethought him to look back after the man in the straw hat the companion of this brief interval which had after all been so fruitful. But he was not in his former place, nor in the tram itself, nor yet at the next stop, in short his whereabouts remained a mystery.

Gustave Aschenbach was born at L—, a country town in the province of Silesia. He was the son of an upper official in the judicature, and his forbears had all been officers, judges, departmental functionaries—men who lived their strict, decent, sparing lives in the service of king and state. Only once before had a livelier mentality—in the quality of a clergyman—turned up among them, but swifter, more perceptive blood had in the generation before the poet's flowed into the stock from the mother's side: she being the daughter of a Bohemian musical conductor. It was from her he had the foreign traits that betrayed themselves in his appearance. The union of dry, conscientious officialdom and ardent, obscure impulse, produced an artist—and this particular artist, author of the lucid and vigorous prose epic on the life of Frederick the Great, careful tireless weaver of the richly patterned tapestry entitled *Maia*, a novel that gathers up the threads of many human destinies in the warp of a single idea, creator of that powerful narrative *The Abject* which taught a whole grateful generation that a man can still be capable of moral resolution even after he has plumbed the depths of knowledge, and lastly—to complete the tale of works of his mature period—the writer of that



impassioned discourse on the theme of Mind and Art whose ordered force and antithetic eloquence led serious critics to rank it with Schiller's *Simple and Sentimental Poetry*

Aschenbach's whole soul, from the very beginning, was bent on fame—and thus, while not precisely precocious, yet thanks to the unmistakable trenchancy of his personal accent he was early ripe and ready for a career. Almost before he was out of high school he had a name. Ten years later he had learned to sit at his desk and sustain and live up to his growing reputation, to write gracious and pregnant phrases in letters that must needs be brief, for many claims press upon the solid and successful man. At forty, worn down by the strains and stresses of his actual task, he had to deal with a daily post heavy with tributes from his own and foreign countries.

Remote on one hand from the banal, on the other from the eccentric, his genius was calculated to win at once the adhesion of the general public and the admiration, both sympathetic and stimulating of the connoisseur. From childhood up he was pushed on every side to achievement and achievement of no ordinary kind, and so his young days never knew the sweet idleness and blithe *laissez aller* that belong to youth. A nice observer once said of him in company—it was at the time when he fell ill in Vienna in his thirty-fifth year: "You see, Aschenbach has always lived like this"—here the speaker closed the fingers of his left hand to a fist—never like this"—and he let his open hand hang relaxed from the back of his chair. It was apt. And this attitude was the more morally valiant in that Aschenbach was not by nature robust—he was only called to the constant tension of his career, not actually born to it.

By medical advice he had been kept from school and educated at home. He had grown up solitary, without comradeship yet had early been driven to see that he belonged to those whose talent is not so much out of the common as is the physical basis on which talent relies for its fulfilment. It is a seed that gives early of its fruit, whose powers seldom reach a ripe old age. But his favourite motto was "Hold fast", indeed in his novel on the life of Frederick the Great he envisaged nothing else than the apotheosis of the old hero's word of command, *Durchhalten*—which seemed to him the epitome of fortitude under suffering. Besides, he deeply desired to live to a good old age, for it was his conviction that only the artist to whom it has been granted to be fruitful on all stages of our human scene can be truly great, or universal, or worthy of honour.

Bearing the burden of his genius, then, upon such slender shoulders and resolved to go so far, he had the more need of discipline—and discipline, fortunately, was his native inheritance from the father's side. At forty, at fifty, he was still living as he had commenced to live in the years when others are prone to waste and revel, dream high thoughts and postpone fulfilment. He began his day with a cold shower over chest and back, then, setting a pair of tall wax candles in silver holders at the head of his manuscript, he sacrificed to art, in two or three hours of almost religious fervour, the powers he had assembled in sleep. Outsiders might be pardoned for believing that his *Maia* world and the epic ampli-

tude revealed by the life of Frederick were a manifestation of great power working under high pressure, that they came forth, as it were, all in one breath. It was the more triumph for his morale, for the truth was that they were heaped up to greatness in layer after layer, in long days of work, out of hundreds and hundreds of single inspirations, they owed their excellence, both of mass and detail, to one thing and one alone—that their creator could hold out for years under the strain of the same piece of work, with an endurance and a tenacity of purpose like that which had conquered his native province of Silesia, devoting to actual composition none but his best and freshest hours.

For an intellectual product of any value to exert an immediate influence which shall also be deep and lasting, it must rest on an inner harmony, yes, an affinity, between the personal destiny of its author and that of his contemporaries in general. Men do not know why they award fame to one work of art rather than another. Without being in the faintest connoisseurs, they think to justify the warmth of their commendations by discovering in it a hundred virtues, whereas the real ground of their applause is inexplicable—it is sympathy. Aschenbach had once given direct expression—though in an unobtrusive place—to the idea that almost everything conspicuously great is great in despite. It has come into being in defiance of affliction and pain, poverty, destitution, bodily weakness, vice, passion, and a thousand other obstructions. And that was more than observation—it was the fruit of experience, it was precisely the formula of his life and fame, it was the key to his work. What wonder, then, if it was also the fixed character, the outward gesture, of his most individual figures?

The new type of hero favoured by Aschenbach, and recurring many times in his works, had early been analysed by a shrewd critic. "The conception of an intellectual and virginal manliness, which clenches its teeth and stands in modest defiance of the swords and spears that pierce its side." That was beautiful. It was *spirituel*. It was exact, despite the suggestion of too great passivity it held. Forbearance in the face of fate, beauty constant under torture, are not merely passive. They are a positive achievement, an explicit triumph, and the figure of Sebastian is the most beautiful symbol, if not of art as a whole yet certainly of the art we speak of here. Within that world of Aschenbach's creation were exhibited many phases of this theme. There was the aristocratic self-command that is eaten out within and for as long as it can conceals its biologic decline from the eyes of the world, the serene and ugly outside, hiding the embers of smouldering fire—and having power to fan them to so pure a flame as to challenge supremacy in the domain of beauty itself, the pallid languors of the flesh, contrasted with the fiery ardours of the spirit within, which can fling a whole proud people down at the foot of the Cross, at the feet of its own sheer self-abnegation, the gracious bearing preserved in the stern stark service of form, the unreal, precarious existence of the born intrigant with its swiftly enervating alternation of schemes and desires—all these human fates and many more of their like one read in Aschenbach's pages, and reading them might doubt the existence of any other kind of heroism than the heroism born of weakness. And, after all, what

kind could be truer to the spirit of the times? Gustave Aschenbach was the poet-spokesman of all those who labour at the edge of exhaustion, of the overburdened, of those who are already worn out but still hold themselves upright, of all our modern moralizers of accomplishment, with stunted growth and scanty resources, who yet contrive by skilful husbanding and prodigious spasms of will to produce, at least for a while the effect of greatness. There are many such, they are the heroes of the age. And in Aschenbach's pages they saw themselves, he justified, he exalted them, he sang their praise—and they, they were grateful, they heralded his fame.

He had been young and crude with the times and by them badly counselled. He had taken false steps, blundered, exposed himself, offended in speech and writing against tact and good sense. But he had attained to honour, and honour, he used to say, is the natural goal towards which every considerable talent presses with whip and spur. Yes, one might put it that his whole career had been one conscious and overweening ascent to honour, which left in the rear all the misgivings or self-derogation which might have hampered him.

What pleases the public is lively and vivid delineation which makes no demands on the intellect, but passionate and absolutist youth can only be enthralled by a problem. And Aschenbach was as absolute, as problematist, as any youth of them all. He had done homage to intellect, had overworked the soil of knowledge and ground up her seed-corn, had turned his back on the "mysteries," called genius itself in question, held up art to scorn—yes, even while his faithful following revelled in the characters he created, he, the young artist, was taking away the breath of the twenty-year-olds with his cynic utterances on the nature of art and the artist life.

But it seems that a noble and active mind blunts itself against nothing so quickly as the sharp and bitter irritant of knowledge. And certain it is that the youth's constancy of purpose, no matter how painfully conscientious, was shallow beside the mature resolution of the master of his craft, who made a right-about-face, turned his back on the realm of knowledge, and passed it by with averted face, lest it lame his will or power of action, paralyse his feelings or his passions, deprive any of these of their conviction or utility. How else interpret the oft-cited story of *The Subject* than as a rebuke to the excesses of psychology-ridden age, embodied in the delineation of the weak and silly fool who manages to lead fate by the nose, driving his wife, out of sheer innate pusillanimity, into the arms of a beardless youth, and making this disaster an excuse for trifling away the rest of his life?

With rage the author here rejects the rejected, casts out the outcast—and the measure of his fury is the measure of his condemnation of all moral shilly-shallying. Explicitly he renounces sympathy with the abyss, explicitly he refutes the flabby humanitarianism of the phrase *Tout comprendre cest tout pardonner*. What was here unfolding, or rather was already in full bloom, was the "miracle of regained detachment," which a little later became the theme of one of the author's dialogues.

dwelt upon not without a certain oracular emphasis Strange sequence of thought! Was it perhaps an intellectual consequence of this rebirth, this new austerity, that from now on his style showed an almost exaggerated sense of beauty, a lofty purity, symmetry, and simplicity, which gave his productions a stamp of the classic, of conscious and deliberate mastery? And yet this moral fibre, surviving the hampering and disintegrating effect of knowledge, does it not result in its turn in a dangerous simplification, in a tendency to equate the world and the human soul, and thus to strengthen the hold of the evil, the forbidden, and the ethically impossible? And has not form two aspects? Is it not moral and immoral at once moral in so far as it is the expression and result of discipline, immoral—yes, actually hostile to morality—in that of its very essence it is indifferent to good and evil, and deliberately concerned to make the moral world stoop beneath its proud and undivided sceptre?

Be that as it may Development is destiny, and why should a career attended by the applause and adulation of the masses necessarily take the same course as one which does not share the glamour and the obligations of fame? Only the incorrigible bohemian smiles or scoffs when a man of transcendent gifts outgrows his carefree prentice stage, recognizes his own worth and forces the world to recognize it too and pay it homage, though he puts on a courtly bearing to hide his bitter struggles and his loneliness Again, the play of a developing talent must give its possessor joy, if of a wilful, defiant kind With time, an official note, something almost expository, crept into Gustave Aschenbach's method His later style gave up the old sheer audacities, the fresh and subtle nuances—it became fixed and exemplary, conservative, formal, even formulated Like Louis XIV—or as tradition has it of him—Aschenbach, as he went on in years, banished from his style every common word It was at this time that the school authorities adopted selections from his works into their text-books And he found it only fitting—and had no thought but to accept—when a German prince signalized his accession to the throne by conferring upon the poet-author of the life of Frederick the Great on his fiftieth birthday the letters-patent of nobility

He had roved about for a few years, trying this place and that as a place of residence, before choosing, as he soon did, the city of Munich for his permanent home And there he lived, enjoying among his fellow-citizens the honour which is in rare cases the reward of intellectual eminence He married young, the daughter of a university family, but after a brief term of wedded happiness his wife had died A daughter, already married, remained to him A son he never had

Gustave von Aschenbach was somewhat below middle height, dark and smooth-shaven, with a head that looked rather too large for his almost delicate figure He wore his hair brushed back, it was thin at the parting, bushy and grey on the temples, framing a lofty, rugged, knotty brow—if one may so characterize it The nose-piece of his rimless gold spectacles cut into the base of his thick, aristocratically hooked nose The mouth was large, often lax, often suddenly narrow and tense, the cheeks lean and furrowed, the pronounced chin slightly cleft The vicissitudes of fate,

it seemed, must have passed over this head, for he held it, plaintively, rather on one side, yet it was art, not the stern discipline of an active career, that had taken over the office of modelling these features. Behind this brow were born the flashing thrust and parry of the dialogue between Frederick and Voltaire on the theme of war, these eyes, weary and sunken, gazing through their glasses, had beheld the blood-stained inferno of the hospitals in the Seven Years' War. Yes, personally, speaking too, art heightens life. She gives deeper joy, she consumes more swiftly. She engraves adventures of the spirit and the mind in the faces of votaries: let them lead outwardly a life of the most cloistered calm, she will in the end produce in them a fastidiousness, an over-refinement, a nervous fever and exhaustion, such as a career of extravagant passions and pleasures can hardly show.

Eager though he was to be off, Aschenbach was kept in Munich by affairs both literary and practical for some two weeks after that walk of his. But at length he ordered his country home put ready against his return within the next few weeks, and on a day between the middle and the end of May took the evening train for Trieste, where he stopped only twenty-four hours, embarking for Pola the next morning but one.

What he sought was a fresh scene, without associations, which should yet be not too out-of-the-way, and accordingly he chose an island in the Adriatic, not far off the Istrian coast. It had been well known some years for its splendidly rugged cliff formations on the side next the open sea and its population, clad in a bright flutter of rags and speaking an outlandish tongue. But there was rain and heavy air, the society at the hotel was provincial Austrian, and limited, besides, it annoyed him not to be able to get at the sea—he missed the close and soothing contact which only a gentle sandy slope affords. He could not feel this was the place he sought, an inner impulse made him wretched, urging him on he knew not whither, he racked his brains, he looked up boats, then all at once his goal stood plain before his eyes. But of course! When one wanted to arrive overnight at the incomparable, the fabulous, the like-nothing-else-in-the-world, where was it one went? Why, obviously, he had intended to go there, what ever was he doing here? A blunder. He made all haste to correct it, announcing his departure at once. Ten days after his arrival on the island a swift motor-boat bore him and his luggage in the misty dawning back across the water to the naval station, where he landed only to pass over the landing-stage and on to the wet decks of a ship lying there with steam up for the passage to Venice.

It was an ancient hulk belonging to an Italian line, obsolete, dingy, grimed with soot. A dirty hunchbacked sailor, smirkingly polite conducted him at once belowships to a cavernous, lamplit cabin. There behind a table sat a man with a beard like a goat's, he had his hat on the back of his head, a cigar-stump in the corner of his mouth, he reminded Aschenbach of an old-fashioned circus-director. This person put the usual questions and wrote out a ticket to Venice, which he issued to the traveller with many commercial flourishes.

"A ticket for Venice," repeated he, stretching out his arm to dip the pen into the thick ink in a tilted ink-stand "One first-class to Venice! Here you are, *signore mio*" He made some scrawls on the paper, strewed bluish sand on it out of a box, thereafter letting the sand run off into an earthen vessel, folded the paper with bony yellow fingers, and wrote on the outside "An excellent choice," he rattled on "Ah, Venice! What a glorious city! Irresistibly attractive to the cultured man for her past history as well as her present charm" His copious gesturings and empty phrases gave the odd impression that he feared the traveller might alter his mind. He changed Aschenbach's note, laying the money on the spotted table-cover with the glibness of a croupier "A pleasant visit to you, *signore*," he said, with a melodramatic bow "Delighted to serve you" Then he beckoned and called out "Next" as though a stream of passengers stood waiting to be served, though in point of fact there was not one. Aschenbach returned to the upper deck.

He leaned an arm on the railing and looked at the idlers lounging along the quay to watch the boat go out. Then he turned his attention to his fellow-passengers. Those of the second class, both men and women, were squatted on their bundles of luggage on the forward deck. The first cabin consisted of a group of lively youths, clerks from Pola, evidently, who had made up a pleasure excursion to Italy and were not a little thrilled at the prospect, bustling about and laughing with satisfaction at the stir they made. They leaned over the railings and shouted, with a glib command of epithet, derisory remarks at such of their fellow-clerks as they saw going to business along the quay, and these in turn shook their sticks and shouted as good back again. One of the party, in a dandified buff suit, a rakish panama with a coloured scarf, and a red cravat, was loudest of the loud. He outcrowded all the rest. Aschenbach's eyes dwelt on him, and he was shocked to see that the apparent youth was no youth at all. He was an old man, beyond a doubt, with wrinkles and crow's-feet round eyes and mouth, the dull carmine of the cheeks was rouge, the brown hair a wig. His neck was shrunken and sinewy, his turned-up moustaches and small imperial were dyed, and the unbroken double row of yellow teeth he showed when he laughed were but too obviously a cheapish false set. He wore a seal ring on each forefinger, but the hands were those of an old man. Aschenbach was moved to shudder as he watched the creature and his association with the rest of the group. Could they not see he was old, that he had no right to wear the clothes they wore or pretend to be one of them? But they were used to him, it seemed, they suffered him among them, they paid back his jokes in kind and playful pokes in the ribs he gave them. How could they? Aschenbach put his hand to his brow, he covered his eyes, for he had slept little, and they smarted. He felt not quite canny, as though the world were suffering a dreamlike distortion of perspective which he might arrest by shutting it all out for a few minutes and then looking at it afresh. But instead he felt a floating sensation, and opened his eyes with unreasoning alarm to find that the ship's dark sluggish bulk was slowly leaving the jetty. Inch by inch, with the to-and-fro motion of her machinery, the strip of iridescent dirty water widened, the

boat manœuvred clumsily and turned her bow to the open sea. Aschenbach moved over to the starboard side, where the hunchbacked sailor had set up a deck-chair for him, and a steward in a greasy dress-coat asked for orders.

The sky was grey, the wind humid. Harbour and island dropped behind, all sight of land soon vanished in mist. Flakes of sodden, clammy soot fell upon the still undried deck. Before the boat was an hour out a canvas had to be spread as a shelter from the rain.

Wrapped in his cloak, a book in his lap, our traveller rested, the hours slipped by unawares. It stopped raining, the canvas was taken down. The horizon was visible right round beneath the sombre dome of the sky stretched the vast plain of empty sea. But immeasurable unarticulated space weakens our power to measure time as well: the time-sense falters and grows dim. Strange, shadowy figures passed and repassed—the elderly coxcomb, the goat-bearded man from the bowels of the ship—with vague gesturings and mutterings through the traveller's mind as he lay. He fell asleep.

At midday he was summoned to luncheon in a corridor-like saloon with the sleeping-cabins giving off it. He ate at the head of the long table, the party of clerks, including the old man, sat with the jolly captain at the other end, where they had been carousing since ten o'clock. The meal was wretched, and soon done. Aschenbach was driven to seek the open and look at the sky—perhaps it would lighten presently above Venice.

He had not dreamed it could be otherwise, for the city had ever given him a brilliant welcome. But sky and sea remained leaden, with spurts of fine, mistlike rain, he reconciled himself to the idea of seeing a different Venice from that he had always approached on the landward side. He stood by the foremast, his gaze on the distance, alert for the first glimpse of the coast. And he thought of the melancholy and susceptible poet who had once seen the towers and turrets of his dreams rise out of these waves, repeated the rhythms born of his awe, his mingled emotions of joy and suffering—and easily susceptible to a prescience already shaped within him, he asked his own sober, weary heart if a new enthusiasm, a new preoccupation, some late adventure of the feelings could still be in store for the idle traveller.

The flat coast showed on the right, the sea was soon populous with fishing-boats. The Lido appeared and was left behind as the ship glided at half speed through the narrow harbour of the same name, coming to a full stop on the lagoon in sight of garish, badly built houses. Here it waited for the boat bringing the sanitary inspector.

An hour passed. One had arrived—and yet not. There was no conceivable haste—yet one felt harried. The youths from Pola were on deck, drawn hither by the martial sound of horns coming across the water from the direction of the Public Gardens. They had drunk a good deal of Asti and were moved to shout and hurrah at the dilling *bersaglieri*. But the young-old man was a truly repulsive sight in the condition to which his company with youth had brought him. He could not carry his wine like them: he was pitably drunk. He swayed as he stood—watery-eyed, a cigarette between his shaking fingers, keeping upright with difficulty. He

could not have taken a step without falling and knew better than to stir, but his spirits were deplorably high. He buttonholed anyone who came within reach, he stuttered, he giggled, he leered, he fatuously shook his beringed old forefinger, his tongue kept seeking the corner of his mouth in a suggestive motion ugly to behold. Aschenbach's brow darkened as he looked, and there came over him once more a dazed sense, as though things about him were just slightly losing their ordinary perspective, beginning to show a distortion that might merge into the grotesque. He was prevented from dwelling on the feeling, for now the machinery began to thud again, and the ship took up its passage through the Canale di San Marco which had been interrupted so near the goal.

He saw it once more, that landing-place that takes the breath away, that amazing group of incredible structures the Republic set up to meet the awe-struck eye of the approaching seafarer: the airy splendour of the palace and Bridge of Sighs, the columns of lion and saint on the shore, the glory of the projecting flank of the fairy temple, the vista of gateway and clock. Looking, he thought that to come to Venice by the station is like entering a palace by the back door. No one should approach, save by the high seas as he was doing now, this most improbable of cities.

The engines stopped. Gondolas pressed alongside, the landing-stairs were let down, customs officials came on board and did their office, people began to go ashore. Aschenbach ordered a gondola. He meant to take up his abode by the sea and needed to be conveyed with his luggage to the landing-stage of the little steamers that ply between the city and the Lido. They called down his order to the surface of the water where the gondoliers were quarreling in dialect. Then came another delay while his trunk was worried down the ladder-like stairs. Thus he was forced to endure the importunities of the ghastly young-old man, whose drunken state obscurely urged him to pay the stranger the honour of a formal farewell. "We wish you a very pleasant sojourn," he babbled, bowing and scripping. "Pray keep us in mind. *Au revoir excusez et bon jour votre Excellence*." He drooled, he blinked, he licked the corner of his mouth, the little imperial bristled on his elderly chin. He put the tips of two fingers to his mouth and said thickly, "Give her our love, will you, the p-pretty little de u —here his upper plate came away and fell down on the lower one. Aschenbach escaped. "Little sweet-sweet-sweetheart" he heard behind him, gurgled and stuttered, as he climbed down the rope stair into the boat.

Is there anyone but must repress a secret thrill, on arriving in Venice for the first time—or returning thither after long absence—and stepping into a Venetian gondola? That singular conveyance, come down unchanged from ballad times, black as nothing else on earth except a coffin—what pictures it calls up of lawless, silent adventures in the plashing night, or even more, what visions of death itself, the bier and solemn rites and last soundless voyage! And has anyone remarked that the seat in such a bark, the armchair lacquered in coffin-black and dully black-upholstered, is the softest, most luxurious, most relaxing seat in the world? Aschenbach realized it when he had let himself down at the gondolier's feet,



opposite his luggage, which lay neatly composed on the vessel's beak. The rowers still gestured fiercely, he heard their harsh, incoherent tones. But the strange stillness of the water-city seemed to take up their voices gently, to disembody and scatter them over the sea. It was warm here in the harbour. The lukewarm air of the sirocco breathed upon him, he leaned back among his cushions and gave himself to the yielding element, closing his eyes for very pleasure in an indolence as unaccustomed as sweet. "The trip will be short," he thought, and wished it might last forever. They gently swayed away from the boat with its bustle and clamour of voices.

It grew still and stiller all about. No sound but the splash of the oars, the hollow slap of the wave against the steep, black, halbert-shaped beak of the vessel, and one sound more—a muttering by fits and starts, expressed as it were by the motion of his arms, from the lips of the gondolier. He was talking to himself, between his teeth. Aschenbach glanced up and saw with surprise that the lagoon was widening, his vessel was headed for the open sea. Evidently it would not do to give himself up to sweet *far niente*; he must see his wishes carried out.

"You are to take me to the steamboat landing, you know," he said, half turning round towards it. The muttering stopped. There was no reply.

"Take me to the steamboat landing," he repeated, and this time turned quite round and looked up into the face of the gondolier as he stood there on his little elevated deck, high against the pale grey sky. The man had an unpleasing, even brutish face, and wore blue clothes like a sailor's, with a yellow sash, a shapeless straw hat with the brim torn at the brim, perched rakishly on his head. His facial structure, as well as the curling blond moustache under the short snub nose, showed him to be of non-Italian stock. Physically rather undersized, so that one would have expected him to be very muscular, he pulled vigorously at the oar, putting all his body-weight behind each stroke. Now and then the effort he made curled back his lips and bared his white teeth to the gums. He spoke in a decided, almost curt voice, looking out to sea over his forebowed head. "The signore is going to the Lido."

Aschenbach answered: "Yes, I am. But I only took the gondola to cross over to San Marco. I am using the *vaporetto* from there."

"But the signore cannot use the *vaporetto*."

"And why not?"

"Because the *vaporetto* does not take luggage."

It was true. Aschenbach remembered it. He made no answer. But the man's gruff, overbearing manner, so unlike the usual courtesy of his countrymen towards the stranger, was intolerable. Aschenbach spoke again: "That is my own affair. I may want to give my luggage in deposit. You will turn round?"

No answer. The oar splashed, the wave struck dull against the prow. And the muttering began anew, the gondolier talked to himself, between his teeth.

What should the traveller do? Alone on the water with this tongue-tied, obstinate, uncanny man, he saw no way of enforcing his will. And

if only he did not excite himself, how pleasantly he might rest! Had he not wished the voyage might last forever? The wisest thing—and how much the pleasantest!—was to let matters take their own course. A spell of indolence was upon him, it came from the chair he sat in—this low, black-upholstered arm-chair, so gently rocked at the hands of the despotic boatman in his rear. The thought passed dreamily through Aschenbach's brain that perhaps he had fallen into the clutches of a criminal, it had not power to rouse him to action. More annoying was the simpler explanation that the man was only trying to extort money. A sense of duty, a recollection, as it were, that this ought to be prevented, made him collect himself to say

How much do you ask for the trip?"

And the gondolier, gazing out over his head, replied "The signore will pay."

There was an established reply to this, Aschenbach made it, mechanically

I will pay nothing whatever if you do not take me where I want to go."

The signore wants to go to the Lido."

But not with you."

I am a good rower signore. I will row you well."

So much is true, thought Aschenbach, and again he relaxed. "That is true, you row me well. Even if you mean to rob me, even if you hit me in the back with your oar and send me down to the kingdom of Hades, even then you will have rowed me well."

But nothing of the sort happened. Instead, they fell in with company. A boat came alongside and waylaid them, full of men and women singing to guitar and mandolin. They rowed persistently bow for bow with the gondolier and filled the silence that had rested on the waters with their lyric love of gain. Aschenbach tossed money into the hat they held out. The music stopped at once, they rowed away. And once more the gondolier's mutter became audible as he talked to himself in fits and snatches.

Thus they rowed on, rocked by the wash of a steamer returning citywards. At the landing two municipal officials were walking up and down with their hands behind their backs and their faces turned towards the lagoon. Aschenbach was helped on shore by the old man with a boat-hook who is the permanent feature of every landing-stage in Venice, and having no small change to pay the boatman, crossed over into the hotel opposite. His wants were supplied in the lobby, but when he came back his possessions were already on a hand-car on the quay, and gondola and gondolier were gone.

"He ran away signore," said the old boatman. "A bad lot, a man without a licence. He is the only gondolier without one. The others telephoned over and he knew we were on the look-out, so he made off."

Aschenbach shrugged.

"The signore has had a ride for nothing," said the old man, and held out his hat. Aschenbach dropped some coins. He directed that his luggage be taken to the Hotel des Bains and followed the hand-car through the avenue, that white-blossoming avenue with taverns, booths, and pensions

on either side it, which runs across the island diagonally to the beach

He entered the hotel from the garden terrace at the back and passed through the vestibule and hall into the office. His arrival was expected, and he was served with courtesy and dispatch. The manager, a small, soft, dapper man with a black moustache and a caressing way with him, wearing a French frock-coat, himself took him up in the lift and showed him his room. It was a pleasant chamber, furnished in cherry-wood, with lofty windows looking out to sea. It was decorated with strong-scented flowers. Aschenbach, as soon as he was alone, and while they brought in his trunk and bags and disposed them in the room, went up to one of the windows and stood looking out upon the beach in its afternoon emptiness, and at the sunless sea, now full and sending long, low waves with rhythmic beat upon the sand.

A solitary, unused to speaking of what he sees and feels, has mental experiences which are at once more intense and less articulate than those of a gregarious man. They are sluggish, yet more wayward, and never without a melancholy tinge. Sights and impressions which others brush aside with a glance, a light comment, a smile, occupy him more than they due, they sink silently in, they take on meaning, they become experience, emotion, adventure. Solitude gives birth to the original in us, to beauty unfamiliar and perilous—to poetry. But also, it gives birth to the opposite to the perverse, the illicit, the absurd. Thus the traveller's mind still dwelt with disquiet on the episodes of his journey hither: on the horrible old fop with his drivel about a mistress, on the outlaw boatman and his lost tip. They did not offend his reason, they hardly afforded food for thought, yet they seemed by their very nature fundamentally strange and thereby vaguely disquieting. Yet here was the sea, even in the midst of such thoughts he saluted it with his eyes, exulting that Venice was near and accessible. At length he turned round, disposed his personal belongings and made certain arrangements with the chambermaid for his comfort, washed up, and was conveyed to the ground floor by the green-uniformed Swiss who ran the lift.

He took tea on the terrace facing the sea and afterwards went down and walked some distance along the shore promenade in the direction of Hôtel Excelsior. When he came back it seemed to be time to change for dinner. He did so, slowly and methodically as his way was, for he was accustomed to work while he dressed, but even so found himself a little early when he entered the hall, where a large number of guests had collected—strangers to each other and affecting mutual indifference, yet united in expectancy of the meal. He picked up a paper, sat down in a leather arm-chair, and took stock of the company, which compared most favourably with that he had just left.

This was a broad and tolerant atmosphere, of wide horizons. Subdued voices were speaking most of the principal European tongues. That uniform of civilization, the conventional evening dress, gave outward conformity to the varied types. There were long, dry Americans, large-framed Russians, English ladies, German children with French *bonnes*. The Slavic

element predominated, it seemed In Aschenbach's neighbourhood Polish was being spoken

Round a wicker table next him was gathered a group of young folk in charge of a governess or companion—three young girls, perhaps fifteen to seventeen years old, and a long-haired boy of about fourteen Aschenbach noticed with astonishment the lad's perfect beauty His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture—pale, with a sweet reserve, with clustering honey-coloured ringlets, the brow and nose descending in one line, the winning mouth, the expression of pure and godlike serenity Yet with all this chaste perfection of form it was of such unique personal charm that the observer thought he had never seen, either in nature or art, anything so utterly happy and consummate What struck him further was the strange contrast the group afforded, a difference in educational method, so to speak, shown in the way the brother and sisters were clothed and treated The girls, the eldest of whom was practically grown up, were dressed with an almost disfiguring austerity All three wore half-length slate-coloured frocks of cloister-like plainness, arbitrarily unbecoming in cut, with white turn-over collars as their only adornment Every grace of outline was wilfully suppressed, their hair lay smoothly plastered to their heads, giving them a vacant expression, like a nun's All this could only be by the mother's orders, but there was no trace of the same pedagogic severity in the case of the boy Tenderness and softness, it was plain, conditioned his existence No scissors had been put to the lovely hair that (like the Spinnario's) curled about his brows, above his ears, longer still in the neck He wore an English sailor suit, with quilted sleeves that narrowed round the delicate wrists of his long and slender though still childish hands And this suit, with its breast-knot, lacings, and embroideries, lent the slight figure something "rich and strange," a spoilt, exquisite air The observer saw him in half profile, with one foot in its black patent leather advanced, one elbow resting on the arm of his basket-chair, the cheek nestled into the closed hand in a pose of easy grace, quite unlike the stiff subservient mien which was evidently habitual to his sisters Was he delicate? His facial tint was ivory-white against the golden darkness of his clustering locks Or was he simply a pampered darling, the object of a self-willed and partial love? Aschenbach inclined to think the latter For in almost every artist nature is inborn a wanton and treacherous proneness to side with the beauty that breaks hearts, to single out aristocratic pretensions and pay them homage

A waiter announced, in English, that dinner was served Gradually the company dispersed through the glass doors into the dining-room Late-comers entered from the vestibule or the lifts Inside, dinner was being served, but the young Poles still sat and waited about their wicker table Aschenbach felt comfortable in his deep arm-chair, he enjoyed the beauty before his eyes, he waited with them

The governess, a short, stout, red-faced person, at length gave the signal With lifted brows she pushed back her chair and made a bow to the tall woman, dressed in palest grey, who now entered the hall This

lady's abundant jewels were pearls, her manner was cool and measured, the fashion of her gown and the arrangement of her lightly powdered hair had the simplicity prescribed in certain circles whose piety and aristocracy are equally marked. She might have been, in Germany, the wife of some high official. But there was something faintly fabulous, after all, in her appearance, though lent it solely by the pearls she wore: they were well-nigh priceless, and consisted of ear-rings and a three-stranded necklace, very long, with gems the size of cherries.

The brother and sisters had risen briskly. They bowed over their mother's hand to kiss it, she turning away from them, with a slight smile on her face, which was carefully preserved but rather sharp-nosed and worn. She addressed a few words in French to the governess, then moved towards the glass door. The children followed, the girls in order of age then the governess, and last the boy. He chanced to turn before he crossed the threshold, and as there was no one else in the room, his strange, twilight grey eyes met Aschenbach's, as our traveller sat there with the paper on his knee, absorbed in looking after the group.

There was nothing singular, of course, in what he had seen. They had not gone in to dinner before their mother, they had waited, given her a respectful salute, and but observed the right and proper forms on entering the room. Yet they had done all this so expressly, with such self-respecting dignity, discipline, and sense of duty that Aschenbach was impressed. He lingered still a few minutes, then he, too, went into the dining-room where he was shown a table far off the Polish family, as he noted at once, with a stirring of regret.

Tired, yet mentally alert, he beguiled the long, tedious meal with abstract, even with transcendent matters: pondered the mysterious harmony that must come to subsist between the individual human being and the universal law, in order that human beauty may result, passed on to general problems of form and art, and come at length to the conclusion that what seemed to him fresh and happy thoughts were like the flattering inventions of a dream, which the waking sense proves worthless and insubstantial. He spent the evening in the park, that was sweet with odours of evening—sitting, smoking, wandering about, went to bed betimes, and passed the night in deep, unbroken sleep, visited, however, by varied and lively dreams.

The weather next day was no more promising. A land breeze blew. Beneath a colourless, overcast sky the sea lay sluggish, and as it were shrunk, so far withdrawn as to leave bare several rows of long sandbanks. The horizon looked close and prosaic. When Aschenbach opened his window he thought he smelt the stagnant odour of the lagoons.

He felt suddenly out of sorts and already began to think of leaving. Once, years before, after weeks of bright spring weather, this wind had found him out, it had been so bad as to force him to flee from the city like a fugitive. And now it seemed beginning again—the same feverish distaste, the pressure on his temples, the heavy eyelids. It would be a nuisance to change again, but if the wind did not turn, this was no place for him. To be on the safe side, he did not entirely unpack. At nine o'clock

he went down to the buffet, which lay between the hall and the dining-room and served as breakfast-room

A solemn stillness reigned here, such as it is the ambition of all large hotels to achieve. The waiters moved on noiseless feet. A rattling of tea-things, a whispered word—and no other sounds. In a corner diagonally to the door, two tables off his own, Aschenbach saw the Polish girls with their governess. They sat there very straight, in their stiff blue linen frocks with little turn-over collars and cuffs, their ash-blond hair newly brushed flat, their eyelids red from sleep, and handed each other the marmalade. They had nearly finished their meal. The boy was not there.

Aschenbach smiled. "Aha, little Phæax," he thought. "It seems you are privileged to sleep yourself out." With sudden gaiety he quoted

*Oft veränderten Schmuck und warme Bader und Ruhe*

He took a leisurely breakfast. The porter came up with his braided cap in his hand, to deliver some letters that had been sent on. Aschenbach lighted a cigarette and opened a few letters and thus was still seated to witness the arrival of the sluggard.

He entered through the glass doors and passed diagonally across the room to his sisters at their table. He walked with extraordinary grace—the carriage of the body, the action of the knee, the way he set down his foot in its white shoe—it was all so light, it was at once dainty and proud, it wore an added charm in the childish shyness which made him twice turn his head as he crossed the room, made him give a quick glance and then drop his eyes. He took his seat, with a smile and a murmured word in his soft and blurry tongue, and Aschenbach, sitting so that he could see him in profile, was astonished anew, yes, startled, at the godlike beauty of the human being. The lad had on a light sailor suit of blue and white striped cotton, with a red silk breast-knot and a simple white standing collar round the neck—a not very elegant effect—yet above this collar the head was poised like a flower, in incomparable loveliness. It was the head of Eros, with the yellowish bloom of Parian marble, with fine serious brows, and dusky clustering ringlets standing out in soft plenteousness over temples and ears.

"Good, oh, very good indeed!" thought Aschenbach, assuming the patronizing air of the connoisseur to hide, as artists will, their ravishment over a masterpiece. 'Yes,' he went on to himself, 'if it were not that sea and beach were waiting for me, I should sit here as long as you do.' But he went out on that, passing through the hall, beneath the watchful eye of the functionaries, down the steps and directly across the board walk to the section of the beach reserved for the guests of the hotel. The bathing-master, a barefoot old man in linen trousers and sailor blouse, with a straw hat, showed him the cabin that had been rented for him, and Aschenbach had him set up table and chair on the sandy platform before it. Then he dragged the reclining-chair through the pale yellow sand, closer to the sea, sat down, and composed himself.

He delighted, as always, in the scene on the beach, the sight of sophisticated society giving itself over to a simple life at the edge of the

element The shallow grey sea was already gay with children wading, with swimmers, with figures in bright colours lying on the sand-banks with arms behind their heads Some were rowing in little keelless boats painted red and blue, and laughing when they capsized A long row of *capanne* ran down the beach, with platforms, where people sat as on verandas, and there was social life, with bustle and with indolent repose, visits were paid, amid much chatter, punctilious morning toilettes, hobnobbed with comfortable and privileged dishabille On the hard wet sand close to the sea figures in white bath-robcs or loose wrappings in garish colours strolled up and down A mammoth sandhill had been built up on Aschenbach's right, the work of children, who had stuck it full of tiny flags Vendors of sea-shells, fruit, and cakes knelt beside their wares spread out on the sand A row of cabins on the left stood obliquely to the others and to the sea, thus forming the boundary of the enclosure on this side, and on the little veranda in front of one of these a Russian family was encamped, bearded men with strong white teeth, ripe, indolent women, a Fraulein from the Baltic provinces, who sat at an easel painting the sea and tearing her hair in despair, two ugly but good-natured children and an old maidservant in a head-cloth, with the caressing servile manner of the born dependent There they sat together in grateful enjoyment of their blessings constantly shouting at their romping children, who paid not the slightest heed, making jokes in broken Italian to the funny old man who sold them sweetmeats, kissing each other on the cheeks—no jot concerned that their domesticity was overlooked

"I'll stop," thought Aschenbach "Where could it be better than here?" With his hands clasped in his lap he let his eyes swim in the wideness of the sea, his gaze lose focus, blur, and grow vague in the misty immensity of space His love of the ocean had profound sources the hard-worked artist's longing for rest, his yearning to seek refuge from the thronging manifold shapes of his fancy in the bosom of the simple and vast, and another yearning, opposed to his art and perhaps for that very reason a lure, for the unorganized, the immeasurable, the eternal—in short, for nothingness He whose preoccupation is with excellence longs fervently to find rest in perfection, and is not nothingness a form of perfection? As he sat there dreaming thus, deep, deep into the void, suddenly the margin line of the shore was cut by a human form He gathered up his gaze and withdrew it from the illimitable and lo, it was the lovely boy who crossed his vision coming from the left along the sand He was bare-foot, ready for wading, the slender legs uncovered above the knee, and moved slowly, yet with such a proud, light tread as to make it seem he had never worn shoes He looked towards the diagonal row of cabins, and the sight of the Russian family, leading their lives there in joyous simplicity, distorted his features in a spasm of angry disgust His brow darkened, his lips curled, one corner of the mouth was drawn down in a harsh line that marred the curve of the cheek, his frown was so heavy that the eyes seemed to sink in as they uttered beneath the black and vicious language of hate He looked down, looked threateningly back once more, then

giving it up with a violent and contemptuous shoulder-shrug, he left his enemies in the rear

A feeling of delicacy, a qualm, almost like a sense of shame, made Aschenbach turn away as though he had not seen, he felt unwilling to take advantage of having been, by chance, privy to this passionate reaction. But he was in truth both moved and exhilarated—that is to say, he was delighted. This childish exhibition of fanaticism, directed against the good-naturedest simplicity in the world—it gave to the godlike and inexpressive the final human touch. The figure of the half-grown lad, a masterpiece from nature's own hand, had been significant enough when it gratified the eye alone, and now it evoked sympathy as well—the little episode had set it off, lent it a dignity in the onlooker's eyes that was beyond its years.

Aschenbach listened with still averted head to the boy's voice announcing his coming to his companions at the sand-heap. The voice was clear, though a little weak, but they answered, shouting his name—or his nickname—again and again. Aschenbach was not without curiosity to learn it, but could make out nothing more exact than two musical syllables, something like *Adgio*—or, oftener still, *Adju*, with a long-drawn out *u* at the end. He liked the melodious sound, and found it fitting, said it over to himself a few times and turned back with satisfaction to his papers.

Holding his travelling-pad on his knees, he took his fountain-pen and began to answer various items of his correspondence. But presently he felt it too great a pity to turn his back, and the eyes of his mind, for the sake of mere commonplace correspondence, to this scene which was, after all, the most rewarding one he knew. He put aside his papers and swung round to the sea, in no long time, beguiled by the voices of the children at play, he had turned his head and sat resting it against the chair-back while he gave himself up to contemplating the activities of the exquisite *Adgio*.

His eye found him out at once, the red breast-knot was unmistakable. With some nine or ten companions, boys and girls of his own age and younger, he was busy putting in place an old plank to serve as a bridge across the ditches between the sand-piles. He directed the work by shouting and motioning with his head, and they were all chattering in many tongues—French, Polish, and even some of the Balkan languages. But his was the name oftenest on their lips, he was plainly sought after, wooed, admired. One lad in particular, a Pole like himself, with a name that sounded something like *Jaschui*, a sturdy lad with brilliant black hair, in a belted linen suit, was his particular liegeman and friend. Operations at the sand-pile being ended for the time, they two walked away along the beach, with their arms round each other's waists, and once the lad *Jaschui* gave *Adgio* a kiss.

Aschenbach felt like shaking a finger at him. "But you, Critobulus," he thought with a smile, "you I advise to take a year's leave. That long, at least, you will need for complete recovery." A vendor came by with straw-



berries, and Aschenbach made his second breakfast of the great luscious, dead-ripe fruit. It had grown very warm, although the sun had not availed to pierce the heavy layer of mist. His mind felt relaxed, his senses revelled in this vast and soothing communion with the silence of the sea. The grave and serious man found sufficient occupation in speculating what name it could be that sounded like Adzio. And with the help of a few Polish memories he at length fixed on Tadzio, a shortened form of Thaddeus, which sounded, when called, like Tadzui or Adziu.

Tadzio was bathing. Aschenbach had lost sight of him for a moment, then descried him far out in the water, which was shallow a very long way—saw his head, and his arm striking out like an oar. But his watchful family were already on the alert, the mother and governess called from the veranda in front of their bathing-cabin, until the lad's name, with its softened consonants and long-drawn *u*-sound, seemed to possess the beach like a rallying-cry, the cadence had something sweet and wild. "Tadziu! Tadzui!" He turned and ran back against the water, churning the waves to a foam, his head flung high. The sight of this living figure, virginally pure and austere, with dripping locks beautiful as a tender young god emerging from the depths of sea and sky, outrunning the element—it conjured up mythologies, it was like a primeval legend, handed down from the beginning of time, of the birth of form, of the origin of the gods. With closed lids Aschenbach listened to this poesy hymning itself silently within him, and anon he thought it was good to be here and that he would stop awhile.

Afterwards Tadzio lay on the sand and rested from his bathe, wrapped in his white sheet, which he wore drawn underneath the right shoulder so that his head was cradled on his bare right arm. And even when Aschenbach read, without looking up, he was conscious that the lad was there, that it would cost him but the slightest turn of the head to have the rewarding vision once more in his purview. Indeed, it was almost as though he sat there to guard the youth's repose, occupied, of course, with his own affairs, yet alive to the presence of that noble human creature close at hand. And his heart was stirred, it felt a father's kindness, such an emotion as the possessor of beauty can inspire in one who has offered himself up in spirit to create beauty.

At midday he left the beach, returned to the hotel, and was carried up in the lift to his room. There he lingered a little time before the glass and looked at his own grey hair, his keen and weary face. And he thought of his fame, and how people gazed respectfully at him in the streets on account of his unerring gift of words and their power to charm. He called up all the worldly successes his genius had reaped, all he could remember even his patent of nobility. Then went to luncheon down in the dining-room, sat at his little table and ate. Afterwards he mounted again in the lift, and a group of young folk, Tadzio among them, pressed with him into the little compartment. It was the first time Aschenbach had seen him close at hand, not merely in perspective, and could see and take account of the details of his humanity. Someone spoke to the lad, and he, answer-

ing, with indescribably lovely smile, stepped out again, as they had come to the first floor, backwards, with his eyes cast down "Beauty makes people self-conscious," Aschenbach thought, and considered within himself imperatively why this should be. He had noted, further, that Tadzio's teeth were imperfect, rather jagged and bluish, without a healthy glaze, and of that peculiar brittle transparency which the teeth of chlorotic people often show "He is delicate, he is sickly," Aschenbach thought "He will most likely not live to grow old" He did not try to account for the pleasure the idea gave him

In the afternoon he spent two hours in his room, then took the *vaporetto* to Venice, across the foul-smelling lagoon. He got out at San Marco, had his tea in the Piazza, and then, as his custom was, took a walk through the streets. But this walk of his brought about nothing less than a revolution in his mood and an entire change in all his plans.

There was a hateful sultriness in the narrow streets. The air was so heavy that all the manifold smells wafted out of houses, shops, and cook-shops—smells of oil, perfumery, and so forth—hung low, like exhalations, not dissipating. Cigarette smoke seemed to stand in the air, it drifted so slowly away. Today the crowd in these narrow lanes oppressed the stroller instead of diverting him. The longer he walked, the more was he in tortures under that state, which is the product of the sea air and the sirocco and which excites and enervates at once. He perspired painfully. His eyes rebelled, his chest was heavy, he felt feverish, the blood throbbed in his temples. He fled from the huddled, narrow streets of the commercial city, crossed many bridges, and came into the poor quarter of Venice. Beggars waylaid him, the canals sickened him with their evil exhalations. He reached a quiet square, one of those that exist at the city's heart, forsaken of God and man, there he rested awhile on the margin of a fountain, wiped his brow, and admitted to himself that he must be gone.

For the second time, and now quite definitely, the city proved that in certain weathers it could be directly inimical to his health. Nothing but sheer unreasoning obstinacy would linger on, hoping for an unprophesiable change in the wind. A quick decision was in place. He could not go home at this stage, neither summer nor winter quarters would be ready. But Venice had not a monopoly of sea and shore: there were other spots where these were to be had without the evil concomitants of lagoon and fever-breeding vapours. He remembered a little bathing-place not far from Trieste of which he had had a good report. Why not go thither? At once, of course, in order that this second change might be worth the making. He resolved: he rose to his feet and sought the nearest gondola-landing where he took a boat and was conveyed to San Marco through the gloomy windings of many canals, beneath balconies of delicate marble tileries flanked by carved lions, round slippery corners of wall, past melancholy façades with ancient business shields reflected in the rocking water. It was not too easy to arrive at his destination, for his gondolier, being in league with various lace-makers and glass-blowers, did his best to persuade his fare to pause, look, and be tempted to buy. Thus the charm

of this bizarre passage through the heart of Venice, even while it played upon his spirit, yet was sensibly cooled by the predatory commercial spirit of the fallen queen of the seas

Once back in his hotel, he announced at the office, even before dinner, that circumstances unforeseen obliged him to leave early next morning. The management expressed its regret, it changed his money and receipted his bill. He dined, and spent the lukewarm evening in a rocking-chair on the rear terrace, reading the newspapers. Before he went to bed, he made his luggage ready against the morning.

His sleep was not of the best, for the prospect of another journey made him restless. When he opened his window next morning the sky was still overcast, but the air seemed fresher—and there and then his rue began. Had he not given notice too soon? Had he not let himself be swayed by a slight and momentary indisposition? If he had only been patient, not lost heart so quickly, tried to adapt himself to the climate or even waited for a change in the weather before deciding! Then, instead of the hurry and flurry of departure, he would have before him now a morning like yesterday's on the beach. Too late! He must go on wanting what he had wanted yesterday. He dressed and at eight o'clock went down to breakfast.

When he entered the breakfast-room it was empty. Guests came in while he sat waiting for his order to be filled. As he sipped his tea he saw the Polish girls enter with their governess, chaste and morning-fresh with sleep-reddened eyelids. They crossed the room and sat down at their table in the window. Behind them came the porter, cap in hand, to announce that it was time for him to go. The car was waiting to convey him and other travellers to the Hôtel Excelsior, whence they would go by motor-boat through the company's private canal to the station. Time pressed. But Aschenbach found it did nothing of the sort. There still lacked more than an hour of train-time. He felt irritated at the hotel habit of getting the guests out of the house earlier than necessary, and requested the porter to let him breakfast in peace. The man hesitated and withdrew, only to come back again five minutes later. The car could wait no longer. Good, then it might go, and take his trunk with it, Aschenbach answered with some heat. He would use the public conveyance, in his own time, he begged them to leave the choice of it to him. The functionary bowed. Aschenbach, pleased to be rid of him, made a leisurely meal, and even had a newspaper of the waiter. When at length he rose, the time was grown very short. And it so happened that at that moment Tadzio came through the glass doors into the room.

To reach his own table he crossed the traveller's path, and modestly cast down his eyes before the grey-haired man of the lofty brows—only to lift them again in that sweet way he had and direct his full soft gaze upon Aschenbach's face. Then he was past. "For the last time, Tadzio," thought the elder man. "It was all too brief!" Quite unusually for him, he shaped a farewell with his lips, he actually uttered it, and added "May God bless you!" Then he went out, distributed tips, exchanged farewells with the mild little manager in the frock-coat, and, followed by the porter

with his hand-luggage, left the hotel. On foot as he had come, he passed through the white-blossoming avenue, diagonally across the island to the boat-landing. He went on board at once—but the tale of his journey across the lagoon was a tale of woe, a passage through the very valley of regrets.

It was the well-known route through the lagoon, past San Marco, up the Grand Canal. Aschenbach sat on the circular bench in the bows, with his elbow on the railing, one hand shading his eyes. They passed the Public Gardens, once more the princely charm of the Piazzetta rose up before him and then dropped behind, next came the great row of palaces, the canal curved, and the splendid marble arches of the Rialto came in sight. The traveller gazed—and his bosom was torn. The atmosphere of the city, the faintly rotten scent of swamp and sea, which had driven him to leave—in what deep, tender, almost painful draughts he breathed it in! How was it he had not known, had not thought, how much his heart was set upon it all! What this morning had been slight regret, some little doubt of his own wisdom, turned now to grief, to actual wretchedness, a mental agony so sharp that it repeatedly brought tears to his eyes, while he questioned himself how he could have foreseen it. The hardest part, the part that more than once it seemed he could not bear, was the thought that he should never more see Venice again. Since now for the second time the place had made him ill, since for the second time he had had to flee for his life, he must henceforth regard it as a forbidden spot, to be forever shunned, senseless to try it again, after he had proved himself unfit. Yes, if he fled it now, he felt that wounded pride must prevent his return to this spot where twice he had made actual bodily surrender. And this conflict between inclination and capacity all at once assumed, in this middle-aged man's mind immense weight and importance, the physical defeat seemed a shameful thing, to be avoided at whatever cost, and he stood amazed at the ease with which on the day before he had yielded to it.

Meanwhile the steamer neared the station landing, his anguish of irresolution amounted almost to panic. To leave seemed to the sufferer impossible, to remain not less so. Torn thus between two alternatives, he entered the station. It was very late, he had not a moment to lose. Time pressed, it scourged him onward. He hastened to buy his ticket and looked round in the crowd to find the hotel porter. The man appeared and said that the trunk had already gone off. "Gone already?" "Yes, it has gone to Como." "To Como?" A hasty exchange of words—angry questions from Aschenbach, and puzzled replies from the porter—at length made it clear that the trunk had been put with the wrong luggage even before leaving the hotel, and in company with other trunks was now well on its way in precisely the wrong direction.

Aschenbach found it hard to wear the right expression as he heard this news. A reckless joy, a deep incredible mirthfulness shook him almost as with a spasm. The porter dashed off after the lost trunk, returning very soon, of course, to announce that his efforts were unavailing. Aschenbach said he would not travel without his luggage, that he would go back and wait at the Hotel des Bains until it turned up. Was the company's motor-

boat still outside? The man said yes, it was at the door. With his native eloquence he prevailed upon the ticket-agent to take back the ticket already purchased, he swore that he would wire, that no pains should be spared, that the trunk would be restored in the twinkling of an eye. And the unbelievable thing came to pass: the traveller, twenty minutes after he had reached the station, found himself once more on the Grand Canal on his way back to the Lido.

What a strange adventure indeed, this right-about face of destiny—credible, humiliating, whimsical as any dream! To be passing again within the hour, these scenes from which in profoundest grief he had but now taken leave forever! The little swift-moving vessel, a furrow of foam at its prow, tacking with droll agility between steamboats and gondolas, went like a shot to its goal, and he, its sole passenger, sat hiding the panic and thrills of a truant schoolboy beneath a mask of forced resignation. His breast still heaved from time to time with a burst of laughter over the contretemps. Things could not, he told himself, have fallen out more luckily. There would be the necessary explanations, a few astonished faces—then all would be well once more, a mischance prevented, a grievous error set right, and all he had thought to have left forever was his own once more, his for as long as he liked. And did the boat's swift motion deceive him, or was the wind now coming from the sea?

The waves struck against the tiled sides of the narrow canal. At Hotel Excelsior the automobile omnibus awaited the returned traveller and bore him along by the crisping waves back to the Hotel des Bains. The little mustachioed manager in the frock-coat came down the steps to greet him.

In dulcet tones he deplored the mistake, said how painful it was to the management and himself, applauded Aschenbach's resolve to stop on until the errant trunk came back, his former room, alas, was already taken, but another as good awaited his approval. '*Pas de chance monsieur*' said the Swiss lift-porter, with a smile, as he conveyed him upstairs. And the fugitive was soon quartered in another room which in situation and furnishings almost precisely resembled the first.

He laid out the contents of his hand-bag in their wonted places, then tired out, dazed by the whirl of the extraordinary forenoon, subsided into the arm-chair by the open window. The sea wore a pale-green cast, the air felt thinner and purer, the beach with its cabins and boats had more colour, notwithstanding the sky was still grey. Aschenbach, his hands folded in his lap, looked out. He felt rejoiced to be back, yet displeased with his vacillating moods, his ignorance of his own real desires. Thus for nearly an hour he sat, dreaming, resting, barely thinking. At midday he saw Tadzio, in his striped sailor suit with red breast knot, coming up from the sea, across the barrier and along the board walk to the hotel. Aschenbach recognized him, even at this height, knew it was he before he actually saw him, had it in mind to say to himself: 'Well, Tadzio, so here you are again too!' But the usual greeting died away before it reached his lips, slain by the truth in his heart. He felt the rapture

of his blood, the poignant pleasure, and realized that it was for Tadzio's sake the leavetaking had been so hard

He sat quite still, unseen at his high post, and looked within himself. His features were lively, he lifted his brows, a smile, alert, inquiring, vivid, widened the mouth. Then he raised his head, and with both hands, hanging limp over the chair-arms, he described a slow motion, palms outward, a lifting and turning movement, as though to indicate a wide embrace. It was a gesture of welcome, a calm and deliberate acceptance of what might come.

Now daily the naked god with cheeks aflame drove his four fire-breathing steeds through heaven's spaces, and with him streamed the strong east wind that fluttered his yellow locks. A sheen, like white satin, lay over all the idly rolling sea's expanse. The sand was burning hot. Awnings of rust-coloured canvas were spanned before the bathing-huts, under the ether's quivering silver-blue, one spent the morning hours within the small, sharp square of shadow they purveyed. But evening too was rarely lovely, balsamic with the breath of flowers and shrubs from the near-by park, while overhead the constellations circled in their spheres, and the murmuring of the night-girted sea swelled softly up and whispered to the soul. Such nights as these contained the joyful promise of a sunlit morrow, brim-full of sweetly ordered idleness, studded thick with countless precious possibilities.

The guest detained here by so happy a mischance was far from finding the return of his luggage a ground for setting out anew. For two days he had suffered slight inconvenience and had to dine in the large salon in his travelling-clothes. Then the lost trunk was set down in his room, and he hastened to unpack, filling presses and drawers with his possessions. He meant to stay on—and on, he rejoiced in the prospect of wearing a silk suit for the hot morning hours on the beach and appearing in acceptable evening dress at dinner.

He was quick to fall in with the pleasing monotony of this manner of life, readily enchanted by its mild soft brilliance and ease. And what a spot it is, indeed!—uniting the charms of a luxurious bathing-resort by a southern sea with the immediate nearness of a unique and marvellous city. Aschenbach was not pleasure-loving. Always, wherever and whenever it was the order of the day to be merry, to refrain from labour and make glad the heart, he would soon be conscious of the imperative summons—and especially was this so in his youth—back to the high fatigues, the sacred and fasting service that consumed his days. This spot and this alone had power to beguile him, to relax his resolution, to make him glad. At times—of a forenoon perhaps, as he lay in the shadow of his awning, gazing out dreamily over the blue of the southern sea, or in the mildness of the night, beneath the wide starry sky, ensconced among the cushions of the gondola that bore him Lido-wards after an evening on the Piazza, while the gay lights faded and the melting music of the serenades died away on his ear—he would think of his mountain home, the theatre of his summer labours. There clouds hung low and trailed through

the garden, violent storms extinguished the lights of the house at night, and the ravens he fed swung in the tops of the fir trees. And he would feel transported to Elysium, to the ends of the earth, to a spot most carefree for the sons of men, where no snow is, and no winter, no storms or downpours of rain, where Oceanus sends a mild and cooling breath, and days flow on in blissful idleness, without effort or struggle, entirely dedicate to the sun and the feasts of the sun.

Aschenbach saw the boy Tadzio almost constantly. The narrow confines of their world of hotel and beach, the daily round followed by all alike, brought him in close, almost uninterrupted touch with the beautiful lad. He encountered him everywhere—in the salons of the hotel, on the cooling rides to the city and back, among the splendours of the Piazza, and besides all this in many another going and coming as chance vouchsafed. But it was the regular morning hours on the beach which gave him his happiest opportunity to study and admire the lovely apparition. Yes, this immediate happiness, this daily recurring boon at the hand of circumstance, this it was that filled him with content, with joy in life, enriched his stay, and lingered out the row of sunny days that fell into place so pleasantly one behind the other.

He rose early—as early as though he had a panting press of work—and was among the first on the beach, when the sun lay dazzling white in its morning slumber. He gave the watchman a friendly good-morning and chatted with the barefoot, white-haired old man who prepared his place, spread the awning, trundled out the chair and table onto the little platform. Then he settled down, he had three or four hours before the sun reached its height and the fearful climax of its power, three or four hours while the sea went deeper and deeper blue, three or four hours in which to watch Tadzio.

He would see him come up on the left, along the margin of the sea or from behind, between the cabins or, with a start of joyful surprise, would discover that he himself was late, and Tadzio already down, in the blue and white bathing-suit that was now his only wear on the beach, there and engrossed in his usual activities in the sand, beneath the sun. It was a sweetly idle, trifling, fitful life, of play and rest, of strolling, wading, digging, fishing, swimming, lying on the sand. Often the women sitting on the platform would call out to him in their high voices, "Tadziu! Tadziu!" and he would come running and waving his arms, eager to tell them what he had done, show them what he had found, what caught—shells, sea-horses, jelly-fish, and sideways-running crabs. Aschenbach understood not a word he said, it might be the sheerest commonplace, in his ear it became mingled harmonies. Thus the lad's foreign birth raised his speech to music, a wanton sun showered splendour on him, and the noble distances of the sea formed the background which set off his figure.

Soon the observer knew every line and pose of this form that limned itself so freely against sea and sky, its every loveliness though connoyed by heart, yet thrilled him each day afresh, his admiration knew no bounds, the delight of his eye was unending. Once the lad was summoned to speak

to a guest who was waiting for his mother at their cabin. He ran up, ran dripping wet out of the sea, tossing his curls, and put out his hand, standing with his weight on one leg, resting the other foot on the toes, as he stood there in a posture of suspense the turn of his body was enchanting, while his features wore a look half shamefaced, half conscious of the duty breeding laid upon him to please. Or he would lie at full length, with his bath-robe around him, one slender young arm resting on the sand, his chin in the hollow of his hand, the lad they called Jaschui squatting beside him, paying him court. There could be nothing lovelier on earth than the smile and look with which the playmate thus singled out rewarded his humble friend and vassal. Again, he might be at the water's edge, alone, removed from his family, quite close to Aschenbach, standing erect, his hands clasped at the back of his neck, rocking slowly on the balls of his feet, day-dreaming away into blue space, while little waves ran up and bathed his toes. The ringlets of honey-coloured hair clung to his temples and neck, the fine down along the upper vertebrae was yellow in the sunlight, the thin envelope of flesh covering the torso betrayed the delicate outlines of the ribs and the symmetry of the breast-structure. His armpits were still as smooth as a statue's, smooth the glistening hollows behind the knees, where the blue network of veins suggested that the body was formed of some stuff more transparent than mere flesh. What discipline, what precision of thought were expressed by the tense youthful perfection of this form! And yet the pure, strong will which had laboured in darkness and succeeded in bringing this godlike work of art to the light of day—was it not known and familiar to him, the artist? Was not the same force at work in himself when he strove in cold fury to liberate from the marble mass of language the slender forms of his art which he saw with the eye of his mind and would body forth to men as the mirror and image of spiritual beauty?

Mirror and image! His eyes took in the proud bearing of that figure there at the blue water's edge, with an outburst of rapture he told himself that what he saw was beauty's very essence, form as divine thought, the single and pure perfection which resides in the mind, of which an image and likeness, rare and holy, was here raised up for adoration. This was very frenzy—and without a scruple, nay, eagerly, the aging artist bade it come. His mind was in travail, his whole mental background in a state of flux. Memory flung up in him the primitive thoughts which are youth's inheritance, but which with him had remained latent, never leaping up into a blaze. Has it not been written that the sun beguiles our attention from things of the intellect to fix it on things of the sense? The sun, they say, dazzles, so bewitching reason and memory that the soul for very pleasure forgets its actual state to cling with doting on the loveliest of all the objects she shines on. Yes, and then it is only through the medium of some corporeal being that it can raise itself again to contemplation of higher things. Amor, in sooth, is like the mathematician who in order to give children a knowledge of pure form must do so in the language of pictures, so, too, the god, in order to make visible the spirit,



avails himself of the forms and colours of human youth gilding it with all imaginable beauty that it may serve memory as a tool, the very sight of which then sets us afire with pain and longing

Such were the devotee's thoughts, such the power of his emotions And the sea, so bright with glancing sunbeams, wove in his mind a spell and summoned up a lovely picture there was the ancient planetree outside the walls of Athens, a hallowed, shady spot, fragrant with willow-blossom and adorned with images and votive offerings in honour of the nymphs and Achelous Clear ran the smooth-pebbled stream at the foot of the spreading tree Crickets were fiddling But on the gentle grassy slope, where one could lie yet hold the head erect, and shelter from the scorching heat, two men reclined, an elder with a younger, ugliness paired with beauty and wisdom with grace Here Socrates held forth to youthful Phædrus upon the nature of virtue and desire, wooing him with insinuating wit and charming turns of phrase He told him of the shuddering and unwonted heat that come upon him whose heart is open, when his eye beholds an image of eternal beauty, spoke of the impious and corrupt who cannot conceive beauty though they see its image, and are incapable of awe, and of the fear and reverence felt by the noble soul when he beholds a godlike face or a form which is a good image of beauty how as he gazes he worships the beautiful one and scarcely dares to look upon him but would offer sacrifice as to an idol or a god, did he not fear to be thought stark mad "For beauty, my Phædrus, beauty alone, is lovely and visible at once For, mark you, it is the sole aspect of the spiritual which we can perceive through our senses, or bear so to perceive Else what should become of us, if the divine, if reason and virtue and truth, were to speak to us through the senses? Should we not perish and be consumed by love as Semele aforetime was by Zeus? So beauty, then, is the beauty-lover's way to the spirit—but only the way, only the means, my little Phædrus"

And then, sly arch-lover that he was he said the subtlest thing of all that the lover was nearer the divine than the beloved, for the god was in the one but not in the other—perhaps the tenderest, most mocking thought that ever was thought, and source of all the guile and secret bliss the lover knows

Thought that can merge wholly into feeling, feeling that can merge wholly into thought—these are the artist's highest joy And our solitary felt in himself at this moment power to command and wield a thought that thrilled with emotion, an emotion as precise and concentrated as thought namely, that nature herself shivers with ecstasy when the mind bows down in homage before beauty He felt a sudden desire to write Eros, indeed, we are told, loves idleness and for idle hours alone was he created But in this crisis the violence of our sufferer's seizure was directed almost wholly towards production, its occasion almost a matter of indifference News had reached him on his travels that a certain problem had been raised, the intellectual world challenged for its opinion on a great and burning question of art and taste By nature and experience the theme was his own, and he could not resist the temptation to set it off in the glistening foil of his words He would write, and moreover he

would write in Tadzio's presence. This lad should be in a sense his model, his style should follow the lines of this figure that seemed to him divine, he would snatch up this beauty into the realms of the mind, as once the eagle bore the Trojan shepherd aloft. Never had the pride of the word been so sweet to him, never had he known so well that Eros is in the word, as in those perilous and precious hours when he sat at his rude table, within the shade of his awning, his idol full in his view and the music of his voice in his ears, and fashioned his little essay after the model. Tadzio's beauty set that page and a half of choicest prose, so chaste, so lofty, so poignant with feeling, which would shortly be the wonder and admiration of the multitude. Verily it is well for the world that it sees only the beauty of the completed work and not its origins nor the conditions whence it sprang, since knowledge of the artist's inspiration might often but confuse and alarm and so prevent the full effect of its excellence. Strange hours, indeed, these were, and strangely unnerving the labour that filled them! Strangely fruitful intercourse this, between one body and another mind! When Aschenbach put aside his work and left the beach he felt exhausted, he felt broken—conscience reproached him, as it were after a debauch.

Next morning on leaving the hotel he stood at the top of the stairs leading down from the terrace and saw Tadzio in front of him on his way to the beach. The lad had just reached the gate in the railings, and he was alone. Aschenbach felt, quite simply, a wish to overtake him, to address him and have the pleasure of his reply and answering look, to put upon a blithe and friendly footing his relation with this being who all unconsciously had so greatly heightened and quickened his emotions. The lovely youth moved at a loitering pace—he might easily be overtaken, and Aschenbach hastened his own step. He reached him on the board walk that ran behind the bathing-cabins, and all but put out his hand to lay it on shoulder or head, while his lips parted to utter a friendly salutation in French. But—perhaps from the swift pace of his last few steps—he found his heart throbbing unpleasantly fast, while his breath came in such quick pants that he could only have gasped had he tried to speak. He hesitated, sought after self-control, was suddenly panic-stricken lest the boy notice him hanging there behind him and look round. Then he gave up, abandoned his plan, and passed him with bent head and hurried step.

'Too late! Too late!' he thought as he went by. But was it too late? This step he had delayed to take might so easily have put everything in a lighter key, have led to a sane recovery from his folly. But the truth may have been that the aging man did not want to be cured, that his illusion was far too dear to him. Who shall unriddle the puzzle of the artist nature? Who understands that mingling of discipline and licence in which it stands so deeply rooted? For not to be able to want sobriety is licentious folly. Aschenbach was no longer disposed to self-analysis. He had no taste for it, his self-esteem, the attitude of mind proper to his years, his maturity and single-mindedness disinclined him to look within himself and decide whether it was constraint or puerile sensuality that had

prevented him from carrying out his project. He felt confused, he was afraid someone, if only the watchman, might have been observing his behaviour and final surrender—very much he feared being ridiculous. And all the time he was laughing at himself for his serio-comic seizure. "Quite crestfallen," he thought. "I was like the gamecock that lets his wings droop in the battle. That must be the Love-God himself, that makes us hang our heads at sight of beauty and weighs our proud spirits low as the ground." Thus he played with the idea—he embroidered upon it, and was too arrogant to admit fear of an emotion.

The term he had set for his holiday passed by unheeded, he had no thought of going home. Ample funds had been sent him. His sole concern was that the Polish family might leave, and a chance question put to the hotel barber elicited the information that they had come only very shortly before himself. The sun browned his face and hands, the invigorating salty air heightened his emotional energies. Heretofore he had been wont to give out at once, in some new effort, the powers accumulated by sleep or food or outdoor air, but now the strength that flowed in upon him with each day of sun and sea and idleness he let go up in one extravagant gush of emotional intoxication.

His sleep was fitful, the priceless, equable days were divided one from the next by brief nights filled with happy unrest. He went, indeed, early to bed, for at nine o'clock, with the departure of Tadzio from the scene, the day was over for him. But in the faint greyness of the morning a tender pang would go through him as his heart was minded of its adventure, he could no longer bear his pillow and, rising, would wrap himself against the early chill and sit down by the window to await the sunrise. Awe of the miracle filled his soul new-risen from its sleep. Heaven, earth and its waters yet lay enfolded in the ghostly, glassy pallor of dawn, one paling star still swam in the shadowy vast. But there came a breath, a winged word from far and inaccessible abodes, that Eos was rising from the side of her spouse, and there was that first sweet reddening of the farthest strip of sea and sky that manifests creation to man's sense. She neared, the goddess, ravisher of youth, who stole away Cleitos and Cephalus and, defying all the envious Olympians, tasted beautiful Orion's love. At the world's edge began a strewing of roses, a shining and a blooming ineffably pure, baby cloudlets hung illumined, like attendant amoretti in the blue and blushful haze, purple effulgence fell upon the sea that seemed to heave it forward on its welling waves, from horizon to zenith went great quivering thrusts like golden lances, the gleam became a glare, without a sound, with godlike violence, glow and glare and rolling flames streamed upwards, and with flying hoof-beats the steeds of the sun-god mounted the sky. The lonely watcher sat, the splendour of the god shone on him, he closed his eyes and let the glory kiss his lids. Forgotten feelings, precious pangs of his youth, quenched long since by the stern service that had been his life and now returned so strangely metamorphosed—he recognized them with a puzzled, wondering smile. He mused, he dreamed, his lips slowly shaped a name, still smiling, his face turned seawards and his hands lying folded in his lap, he fell asleep once more as he sat.

But that day, which began so fiercely and, festally, was not like other days, it was transmuted and gilded with mythical significance. For whence could come the breath, so mild and meaningful, like a whisper from higher spheres, that played about temple and ear? Troops of small feathery white clouds ranged over the sky, like grazing herds of the gods. A stronger wind arose, and Poseidon's horses ran up, arching their manes, among them too the steers of him with the purpled locks, who lowered their horns and bellowed as they came on, while like prancing goats the waves on the farther strand leaped among the craggy rocks. It was a world possessed, peopled by Pan, that closed round the spellbound man, and his doting heart conceived the most delicate fancies. When the sun was going down behind Venice, he would sometimes sit on a bench in the park and watch Tadzio, white-clad, with gay-coloured sash, at play there on the rolled gravel with his ball, and at such times it was not Tadzio whom he saw, but Hyacinthus, doomed to die because two gods were rivals for his love. Ah, yes, he tasted the envious pangs that Zephyr knew when his rival, bow and cithara, oracle and all forgot, played with the beauteous youth, he watched the discus, guided by torturing jealousy, strike the beloved head, paled as he received the broken body in his arms, and saw the flower spring up, watered by that sweet blood and signed forevermore with his lament.

There can be no relation more strange, more critical, than that between two beings who know each other only with their eyes, who meet daily, yes, even hourly, eye each other with a fixed regard, and yet by some whim or freak of convention feel constrained to act like strangers. Uneasiness rules between them, unslaked curiosity, a hysterical desire to give rein to their suppressed impulse to recognize and address each other, even, actually, a sort of strained but mutual regard. For one human being instinctively feels respect and love for another human being so long as he does not know him well enough to judge him, and that he does not, the craving he feels is evidence.

Some sort of relation and acquaintanceship was perforce set up between Aschenbach and the youthful Tadzio, it was with a thrill of joy the older man perceived that the lad was not entirely unresponsive to all the tender notice lavished on him. For instance, what should move the lovely youth, nowadays when he descended to the beach, always to avoid the board walk behind the bathing-huts and saunter along the sand, passing Aschenbach's tent in front, sometimes so unnecessarily close as almost to graze his table or chair? Could the power of an emotion so beyond his own so draw, so fascinate its innocent object? Daily Aschenbach would wait for Tadzio. Then sometimes, on his approach, he would pretend to be preoccupied and let the charmer pass unregarded by. But sometimes he looked up, and their glances met, when that happened both were profoundly serious. The elder's dignified and cultured mien let nothing appear of his inward state, but in Tadzio's eyes a question lay—he faltered in his step, gazed on the ground, then up again with that ineffably sweet look he had, and when he was past something in his bearing seemed to say that only good breeding hindered him from turning round.

But once, one evening, it fell out differently. The Polish brother and sisters, with their governess, had missed the evening meal, and Aschenbach had noted the fact with concern. He was restive over their absence and after dinner walked up and down in front of the hotel, in evening dress and a straw hat, when suddenly he saw the nunlike sisters with their companion appear in the light of the arc-lamps, and four paces behind them Tadzio. Evidently they came from the steamer-landing having dined for some reason in Venice. It had been chilly on the lagoon for Tadzio wore a dark-blue reefer-jacket with gilt buttons, and a cap to match. Sun and sea air could not burn his skin, it was the same creamy hue as at first—though he did look a little pale, either from the cold or in the bluish moonlight of the arc-lamps. The shapely brows were so delicately drawn, the eyes so deeply dark—lovelier he was than words could say, and as often the thought visited Aschenbach, and brought its own pang, that language could but extol, not reproduce, the beauties of the sense.

The sight of that dear form was unexpected, it had appeared un-hoped-for, without giving him time to compose his features. Joy surprise, and admiration might have painted themselves quite openly upon his face—and just as this second it happened that Tadzio smiled. Smiled at Aschenbach, unabashed and friendly, a speaking, winning, captivating smile, with slowly parting lips. With such a smile it might be that Narcissus bent over the mirroring pool, a smile profound, infatuated, lingering as he put out his arms to the reflection of his own beauty, the lips just slightly pursed, perhaps half-realizing his own folly in trying to kiss the cold lips of his shadow—with a mingling of coquetry and curiosity and a faint unease, enthralling and enthralled.

Aschenbach received that smile and turned away with it as though entrusted with a fatal gift. So shaken was he that he had to flee from the lighted terrace and front gardens and seek out with hurried steps the darkness of the park at the rear. Reproaches stringently mixed of tenderness and remonstrance burst from him. "How dare you smile like that! No one is allowed to smile like that!" He flung himself on a bench, his composure gone to the winds, and breathed in the nocturnal fragrance of the garden. He leaned back, with hanging arms quivering from head to foot, and quite unmanned he whispered the hackneyed phrase of love and longing—impossible in these circumstances, absurd, abject, ridiculous enough, yet sacred too, and not unworthy of honour even here. "I love you!"

In the fourth week of his stay on the Lido, Gustave von Aschenbach made certain singular observations touching the world about him. He noticed, in the first place, that though the season was approaching its height, yet the number of guests declined and, in particular, that the German tongue had suffered a rout, being scarcely or never heard in the land. At table and on the beach he caught nothing but foreign words. One day at the barber's—where he was now a frequent visitor—he heard something rather startling. The barber mentioned a German family who

had just left the Lido after a brief stay, and rattled on in his obsequious way 'The signore is not leaving—he has no fear of the sickness, has he?' Aschenbach looked at him "The sickness?" he repeated. Whereat the prattler fell silent, became very busy all at once, affected not to hear. When Aschenbach persisted he said he really knew nothing at all about it, and tried in a fresh burst of eloquence to drown the embarrassing subject.

That was one afternoon. After luncheon Aschenbach had himself ferried across to Venice, in a dead calm, under a burning sun, driven by his mania, he was following the Polish young folk, whom he had seen with their companion, taking the way to the landing-stage. He did not find his idol on the Piazza. But as he sat there at tea, at a little round table on the shady side, suddenly he noticed a peculiar odour, which, it seemed to him now, had been in the air for days without his being aware of it: a sweetish, medicinal smell, associated with wounds and disease and suspect cleanliness. He sniffed and pondered and at length recognized it, finished his tea and left the square at the end facing the cathedral. In the narrow space the stench grew stronger. At the street corners placards were stuck up, in which the city authorities warned the population against the danger of certain infections of the gastric system, prevalent during the heated season, advising them not to eat oysters or other shell-fish and not to use the canal waters. The ordinance showed every sign of minimizing an existing situation. Little groups of people stood about silently in the squares and on the bridges, the traveller moved among them, watched and listened and thought.

He spoke to a shopkeeper lounging at his door among dangling coral necklaces and trinkets of artificial amethyst, and asked him about the disagreeable odour. The man looked at him, heavy-eyed, and hastily pulled himself together. 'Just a formal precaution, signore,' he said, with a gesture. 'A police regulation we have to put up with. The air is sultry—the sirocco is not wholesome, as the signore knows. Just a precautionary measure, you understand—probably unnecessary.' Aschenbach thanked him and passed on. And on the boat that bore him back to the Lido he smelt the germicide again.

On reaching his hotel he sought the table in the lobby and buried himself in the newspapers. The foreign-language sheets had nothing. But in the German papers certain rumours were mentioned, statistics given, then officially denied, then the good faith of the denials called in question. The departure of the German and Austrian contingent was thus made plain. As for other nationals, they knew or suspected nothing—they were still undisturbed. Aschenbach tossed the newspapers back on the table.

'It ought to be kept quiet,' he thought, aroused. 'It should not be talked about.' And he felt in his heart a curious elation at these events impending in the world about him. Passion is like crime: it does not thrive on the established order and the common round, it welcomes every blow dealt the bourgeois structure, every weakening of the social fabric, because therein it feels a sure hope of its own advantage. These things that were going on in the unclean alleys of Venice, under cover of an official

hushing-up policy—they gave Aschenbach a dark satisfaction. The city's evil secret mingled with the one in the depths of his heart—and he would have staked all he possessed to keep it, since in his infatuation he cared for nothing but to keep Tadzio here, and owned to himself, not without horror, that he could not exist were the lad to pass from his sight.

He was no longer satisfied to owe his communion with his charmer to chance and the routine of hotel life, he had begun to follow and waylay him. On Sundays, for example, the Polish family never appeared on the beach. Aschenbach guessed they went to mass at San Marco and pursued them thither. He passed from the glare of the Piazza into the golden twilight of the holy place and found him he sought bowed in worship over a *prie-dieu*. He kept in the background, standing on the fissured mosaic pavement among the devout populace, that knelt and muttered and made the sign of the cross, and the crowded splendour of the oriental temple weighed voluptuously on his sense. A heavily ornate priest intoned and gesticulated before the altar, where little candle-flames flickered helplessly in the reek of incense-breathing smoke, and with that cloying sacrificial smell another seemed to mingle—the odour of the sickened city. But through all the glamour and glitter Aschenbach saw the exquisite creature there in front turn his head, seek out and meet his lover's eye.

The crowd streamed out through the portals into the brilliant square thick with fluttering doves, and the fond fool stood aside in the vestibule on the watch. He saw the Polish family leave the church. The children took ceremonial leave of their mother, and she turned towards the Piazzetta on her way home, while his charmer and the cloistered sisters with their governess, passed beneath the clock tower into the Merceria. When they were a few paces on, he followed—he stole behind them on their walk through the city. When they paused, he did so too, when they turned round, he fled into inns and courtyards to let them pass. Once he lost them from view, hunted feverishly over bridges and in filthy *culs-de-sac*, only to confront them suddenly in a narrow passage whence there was no escape, and experience a moment of panic fear. Yet it would be untrue to say he suffered. Mind and heart were drunk with passion, his footsteps guided by the dæmonic power whose pastime it is to trample on human reason and dignity.

Tadzio and his sisters at length took a gondola. Aschenbach hid behind a portico or fountain while they embarked, and directly they pushed off did the same. In a furtive whisper he told the boatman he would tip him well to follow at a little distance the other gondola, just rounding a corner, and fairly sickened at the man's quick, sly grasp and ready acceptance of the go-between's role.

Leaning back among soft, black cushions he swayed gently in the wake of the other black-snouted bark, to which the strength of his passion chained him. Sometimes it passed from his view, and then he was assailed by an anguish of unrest. But his guide appeared to have long practice in affairs like these, always, by dint of short cuts or deft manoeuvres, he contrived to overtake the coveted sight. The air was heavy and foul, the sun burnt down through a slate-coloured haze. Water slapped

gurgling against wood and stone The gondolier's cry, half warning, half salute, was answered with singular accord from far within the silence of the labyrinth They passed little gardens, high up the crumbling wall, hung with clustering white and purple flowers that sent down an odour of almonds Moorish lattices showed shadowy in the gloom The marble steps of a church descended into the canal, and on them a beggar squatted, displaying his misery to view, showing the whites of his eyes, holding out his hat for alms Farther on a dealer in antiquities cringed before his lair, inviting the passer-by to enter and be duped Yes, this was Venice, this the fair frailty that fawned and that betrayed, half fairy-tale, half snare, the city in whose stagnating air the art of painting once put forth so lusty a growth, and where musicians were moved to accords so wierdly lulling and lascivious Our adventurer felt his senses wooed by this voluptuousness of sight and sound tasted his secret knowledge that the city sickened and hid its sickness for love of gain, and bent an ever more unbridled leer on the gondola that glided on before him

It came at last to this—that his frenzy left him capacity for nothing else but to pursue his flame, to dream of him absent, to lavish, lover-like, endearing terms on his mere shadow He was alone, he was a foreigner, he was sunk deep in this belated bliss of his—all which enabled him to pass unblushing through experiences well-nigh unbelievable One night, returning late from Venice, he paused by his beloved's chamber door in the second storey, leaned his head against the panel, and remained there long, in utter drunkenness, powerless to tear himself away, blind to the danger of being caught in so mad an attitude

And yet there were not wholly lacking moments when he paused and reflected, when in consternation he asked himself what path was this on which he had set his foot Like most other men of parts and attainments, he had an aristocratic interest in his forbears, and when he achieved a success he liked to think he had gratified them, compelled their admiration and regard He thought of them now, involved as he was in this illicit adventure seized of these exotic excesses of feeling, thought of their stern self-command and decent manliness, and gave a melancholy smile What would they have said? What, indeed, would they have said to his entire life, that varied to the point of degeneracy from theirs? This life in the bonds of art, had not he himself, in the days of his youth and in the very spirit of those bourgeois forefathers, pronounced mocking judgment upon it? And yet, at bottom, it had been so like their own! It had been a service, and he a soldier, like some of them, and art was war—a grilling, exhausting struggle that nowadays wore one out before one could grow old It had been a life of self-conquest, a life against odds, dour, steadfast, abstinent, he had made it symbolical of the kind of overstrained heroism the time admired, and he was entitled to call it manly, even courageous He wondered if such a life might not be somehow specially pleasing in the eyes of the god who had him in his power For Eros had received most countenance among the most valiant nations—yes, were we not told that in their cities prowess made him flourish exceedingly? And many heroes of olden time had willingly borne his yoke, not counting any



humiliation such if it happened by the god's decree, vows, prostrations, self-abasements, these were no source of shame to the lover, rather they reaped him praise and honour

Thus did the fond man's folly condition his thoughts, thus did he seek to hold his dignity upright in his own eyes And all the while he kept doggedly on the traces of the disreputable secret the city kept hidden at its heart, just as he kept his own—and all that he learned fed his passion with vague, lawless hopes He turned over newspapers at cafes bent on finding a report on the progress of the disease, and in the German sheets, which had ceased to appear on the hotel table, he found a series of contradictory statements The deaths, it was variously asserted ran to twenty, to forty, to a hundred or more, yet in the next day's issue the existence of the pestilence was, if not roundly denied, reported as a matter of a few sporadic cases such as might be brought into a seaport town After that the warnings would break out again, and the protests against the unscrupulous game the authorities were playing No definite information was to be had

And yet our solitary felt he had a sort of first claim on a share in the unwholesome secret, he took a fantastic satisfaction in putting leading questions to such persons as were interested to conceal it, and forcing them to explicit untruths by way of denial One day he attacked the manager, that small, soft-stepping man in the French frock-coat, who was moving about among the guests at luncheon, supervising the service and making himself socially agreeable He paused at Aschenbach's table to exchange a greeting, and the guest put a question, with a negligent, casual air "Why in the world are they forever disinfecting the city of Venice?" "A police regulation," the adroit one replied, "a precautionary measure, intended to protect the health of the public during this unseasonably warm and sultry weather" "Very praiseworthy of the police," Aschenbach gravely responded After a further exchange of meteorological commonplaces the manager passed on

It happened that a band of street musicians came to perform in the hotel gardens that evening after dinner They grouped themselves beneath an iron stanchion supporting an arc-light, two women and two men, and turned their faces, that shone white in the glare, up towards the guests who sat on the hotel terrace enjoying this popular entertainment along with their coffee and iced drinks The hotel lift-boys, waiters, and office staff stood in the doorway and listened, the Russian family displayed the usual Russian absorption in their enjoyment—they had their chairs put down into the garden to be nearer the singers and sat there in a half-circle with gratitude printed on their features, the old serf in her turban erect behind their chairs

These strolling players were adepts at mandolin, guitar, harmonica, even compassing a reedy violin Vocal numbers alternated with instrumental, the younger woman, who had a high shrill voice, joining in a love-duet with the sweetly falsettoing tenor The actual head of the company, however, and incontestably its most gifted member, was the other man, who played the guitar He was a sort of baritone buffo, with no

voice to speak of, but possessed of a pantomimic gift and remarkable burlesque *elan*. Often he stepped out of the group and advanced towards the terrace, guitar in hand, and his audience rewarded his sallies with bursts of laughter. The Russians in their parterre seats were beside themselves with delight over this display of southern vivacity, their shouts and screams of applause encouraged him to bolder and bolder flights.

Aschenbach sat near the balustrade, a glass of pomegranate-juice and soda-water sparkling ruby-red before him, with which he now and then moistened his lips. His nerves drank in thirstily the unlovely sounds, the vulgar and sentimental tunes, for passion paralyses good taste and makes its victims accept with rapture what a man in his senses would either laugh at or turn from with disgust. Idly he sat and watched the antics of the buffoon with his face set in a fixed and painful smile, while inwardly his whole being was rigid with the intensity of the regard he bent on Tadzio, leaning over the railing six paces off.

He lounged there, in the white belted suit he sometimes wore at dinner, in all his innate, inevitable grace, with his left arm on the balustrade, his legs crossed, the right hand on the supporting hip, and looked down on the strolling singers with an expression that was hardly a smile, but rather a distant curiosity and polite toleration. Now and then he straightened himself and with a charming movement of both arms drew down his white blouse through his leather belt, throwing out his chest. And sometimes—Aschenbach saw it with triumph, with horror, and a sense that his reason was tottering—the lad would cast a glance, that might be slow and cautious, or might be sudden and swift, as though to take him by surprise, to the place where his lover sat. Aschenbach did not meet the glance. An ignoble caution made him keep his eyes in leash. For in the rear of the terrace sat Tadzio's mother and governess, and matters had gone so far that he feared to make himself conspicuous. Several times, on the beach, in the hotel lobby, on the Piazza, he had seen, with a stealing numbness, that they called Tadzio away from his neighbourhood. And his pride revolted at the affront, even while conscience told him it was deserved.

The performer below presently began a solo, with guitar accompaniment—a street song in several stanzas, just then the rage all over Italy. He delivered it in a striking and dramatic recitative, and his company joined in the refrain. He was a man of slight build, with a thin, undernourished face, his shabby felt hat rested on the back of his neck, a great mop of red hair sticking out in front, and he stood there on the gravel in advance of his troupe, in an impudent, swaggering posture, twanging the strings of his instrument and flinging a witty and rollicking recitative up to the terrace, while the veins on his forehead swelled with the violence of his effort. He was scarcely a Venetian type, belonging rather to the race of the Neapolitan jesters, half bully, half comedian, brutal, blustering, an unpleasant customer, and entertaining to the last degree. The words of his song were trivial and silly, but on his lips, accompanied with gestures of head, hands, arms, and body with leers and winks and the loose play of the tongue in the corner of his mouth, they

took on meaning, an equivocal meaning, yet vaguely offensive. He wore a white sports shirt with a suit of ordinary clothes, and a strikingly large and naked-looking Adam's apple rose out of the open collar. From that pale, snub-nosed face it was hard to judge of his age, vice sat on it, it was furrowed with grimacing, and two deep wrinkles of defiance and self-will, almost of desperation, stood oddly between the red brows, above the grinning, mobile mouth. But what more than all drew upon him the profound scrutiny of our solitary watcher was that this suspicious figure seemed to carry with it its own suspicious odour. For whenever the refrain occurred and the singer, with waving arms and antic gestures, passed in his grotesque march immediately beneath Aschenbach's seat, a strong smell of carbolic was wafted up to the terrace.

After the song he began to take up money, beginning with the Russian family, who gave liberally, and then mounting the steps to the terrace. But here he became as cringing as he had before been forward. He glided between the tables, bowing and scraping, showing his strong white teeth in a servile smile, though the two deep furrows on the brow were still very marked. His audience looked at the strange creature as he went about collecting his livelihood, and their curiosity was not unmingled with disfavour. They tossed coins with their fingertips into his hat and took care not to touch it. Let the enjoyment be never so great, a sort of embarrassment always comes when the comedian oversteps the physical distance between himself and respectable people. This man felt it and sought to make his peace by fawning. He came along the railing to Aschenbach, and with him came that smell no one else seemed to notice.

"Listen!" said the solitary, in a low voice, almost mechanically, "they are disinfecting Venice—why?" The mountebank answered hoarsely, "Because of the police. Orders, signore. On account of the heat and the sirocco. The sirocco is oppressive. Not good for the health." He spoke as though surprised that anyone could ask, and with the flat of his hand he demonstrated how oppressive the sirocco was. "So there is no plague in Venice?" Aschenbach asked the question between his teeth, very low. The man's expressive face fell, he put on a look of comical innocence. "A plague? What sort of plague? Is the sirocco a plague? Or perhaps our police are a plague! You are making fun of us, signore! A plague! Why should there be? The police make regulations on account of the heat and the weather."

"He gestured 'Quite,'" said Aschenbach, once more, soft and low, and dropping an unduly large coin into the man's hat dismissed him with a sign. He bowed very low and left. But he had not reached the steps when two of the hotel servants flung themselves on him and began to whisper, their faces close to his. He shrugged, seemed to be giving assurances, to be swearing he had said nothing. It was not hard to guess the import of his words. They let him go at last and he went back into the garden, where he conferred briefly with his troupe and then stepped forward for a farewell song.

It was one Aschenbach had never to his knowledge heard before, a rowdy air, with words in impossible dialect. It had a laughing-refrain in which the other three artists joined at the top of their lungs. The

refrain had neither words nor accompaniment, it was nothing but rhythmic, modulated, natural laughter, which the soloist in particular knew how to render with most deceptive realism. Now that he was farther off his audience, his self-assurance had come back, and this laughter of his rang with a mocking note. He would be overtaken, before he reached the end of the last line of each stanza, he would catch his breath, lay his hand over his mouth, his voice would quaver and his shoulders shake, he would lose power to contain himself longer. Just at the right moment each time, it came whooping, bawling, crashing out of him, with a verisimilitude that never failed to set his audience off in profuse and unpremeditated mirth that seemed to add gusto to his own. He bent his knees, he clapped his thigh, he held his sides, he looked ripe for bursting. He no longer laughed, but yelled, pointing his finger at the company there above as though there could be in all the world nothing so comic as they, until at last they laughed in hotel, terrace, and garden, down to the waiters, lift-boys, and servants—laughed as though possessed.

Aschenbach could no longer rest in his chair, he sat poised for flight. But the combined effect of the laughing, the hospital odour in his nostrils, and the nearness of the beloved was to hold him in a spell, he felt unable to stir. Under cover of the general commotion he looked across at Tadzio and saw that the lovely boy returned his gaze with a seriousness that seemed the copy of his own, the general hilarity, it seemed to say, had no power over him, he kept aloof. The grey-haired man was overpowered, disarmed by this docile, childlike deference, with difficulty he refrained from hiding his face in his hands. Tadzio's habit, too, of drawing himself up and taking a deep sighing breath struck him as being due to an oppression of the chest. "He is sickly, he will never live to grow up," he thought once again, with that dispassionate vision to which his madness of desire sometimes so strangely gave way. And compassion struggled with the reckless exultation of his heart.

The players, meanwhile, had finished and gone, their leader bowing and scraping, kissing his hands and adorning his leave-taking with antics that grew madder with the applause they evoked. After all the others were outside, he pretended to run backwards full tilt against a lamp-post and slunk to the gate apparently doubled over with pain. But there he threw off his buffoon's mask, stood erect, with an elastic straightening of his whole figure, ran out his tongue impudently at the guests on the terrace, and vanished in the night. The company dispersed. Tadzio had long since left the balustrade. But he, the lonely man, sat for long, to the waiters' annoyance, before the dregs of pomegranate-juice in his glass. Time passed, the night went on. Long ago, in his parental home, he had watched the sand filter through an hour-glass—he could still see, as though it stood before him, the fragile, pregnant little toy. Soundless and fine the rust-red streamlet ran through the narrow neck, and made, as it declined in the upper cavity, an exquisite little vortex.

The very next afternoon the solitary took another step in pursuit of his fixed policy of baiting the outer world. This time he had all possible success. He went, that is, into the English travel bureau in the Piazza,

changed some money at the desk, and posing as the suspicious foreigner, put his fateful question. The clerk was a tweed-clad young Britisher, with his eyes set close together, his hair parted in the middle, and radiating that steady reliability which makes him like so strange a phenomenon in the *gamin* agile-witted south. He began: "No ground for alarm, sir. A mere formality. Quite regular in view of the unhealthy climatic conditions." But then, looking up, he chanced to meet with his own blue eyes the stranger's weary, melancholy gaze, fixed on his face. The Englishman coloured. He continued in a lower voice, rather confused: "At least, that is the official explanation, which they see fit to stick to. I may tell you there's a bit more to it than that." And then, in his good, straightforward way, he told the truth.

For the past several years Asiatic cholera had shown a strong tendency to spread. Its source was the hot, moist swamps of the delta of the Ganges, where it bred in the mephitic air of that primeval island-jungle, among whose bamboo thickets the tiger crouches, where life of every sort flourishes in rankest abundance, and only man avoids the spot. Thence the pestilence had spread throughout Hindustan, raging with great violence, moved eastwards to China, westward to Afghanistan and Persia, following the great caravan routes, it brought terror to Astrakhan, terror to Moscow. Even while Europe trembled lest the spectre be seen striding westward across country, it was carried by sea from Syrian ports and appeared simultaneously at several points on the Mediterranean littoral, raised its head in Toulon and Malaga, Palermo and Naples, and soon got a firm hold in Calabria and Apulia. Northern Italy had been spared—so far. But in May the horrible vibrations were found on the same day in two bodies: the emaciated, blackened corpses of a bargee and a woman who kept a green-grocer's shop. Both cases were hushed up. But in a week there were ten more—twenty, thirty in different quarters of the town. An Austrian provincial, having come to Venice on a few days' pleasure trip, went home and died with all the symptoms of the plague. Thus was explained the fact that the German-language papers were the first to print the news of the Venetian outbreak. The Venetian authorities published in reply a statement to the effect that the state of the city's health had never been better, at the same time instituting the most necessary precautions. But by that time the food supplies—milk, meat, or vegetables—had probably been contaminated, for death unseen and unacknowledged was devouring and laying waste in the narrow streets, while a brooding, unseasonable heat warmed the waters of the canals and encouraged the spread of the pestilence. Yes, the disease seemed to flourish and wax strong, to redouble its generative powers. Recoveries were rare. Eighty out of every hundred died, and horribly, for the onslaught was of the extremest violence, and not infrequently of the "dry" type, the most malignant form of the contagion. In this form the victim's body loses power to expel the water secreted by the blood-vessels, it shrivels up, he passes with hoarse cries from convulsion to convulsion, his blood grows thick like pitch, and he suffocates in a few hours. He is fortunate indeed, if, as sometimes happens, the disease, after a slight *malaise*, takes the form of a profound

unconsciousness, from which the sufferer seldom or never rouses. By the beginning of June the quarantine buildings of the *ospedale civico* had quietly filled up, the two orphan asylums were entirely occupied, and there was a hideously brisk traffic between the *Nuovo Fundamento* and the island of San Michele, where the cemetery was. But the city was not swayed by high-minded motives or regard for international agreements. The authorities were more actuated by fear of being out of pocket, by regard for the new exhibition of paintings just opened in the Public Gardens, or by apprehension of the large losses the hotels and the shops that catered to foreigners would suffer in case of panic and blockade. And the fears of the people supported the persistent official policy of silence and denial. The city's first medical officer, an honest and competent man, had indignantly resigned his office and been privily replaced by a more compliant person. The fact was known, and this corruption in high places played its part, together with the suspense as to where the walking terror might strike next, to demoralize the baser elements in the city and encourage those antisocial forces which shun the light of day. There was intemperance, indecency, increase of crime. Evenings one saw many drunken people, which was unusual. Gangs of men in surly mood made the streets unsafe, theft and assault were said to be frequent, even murder, for in two cases persons supposedly victims of the plague were proved to have been poisoned by their own families. And professional vice was rampant, displaying excesses heretofore unknown and only at home much farther south and in the east.

Such was the substance of the Englishman's tale. "You would do well," he concluded, "to leave today instead of tomorrow. The blockade cannot be more than a few days off."

"Thank you," said Aschenbach, and left the office.

The Piazza lay in sweltering sunshine. Innocent foreigners sat before the cafes or stood in front of the cathedral, the centre of clouds of doves with fluttering wings, tried to shoulder each other away and pick the kernels of maize from the extended hand. Aschenbach strode up and down the spacious flags, feverishly excited, triumphant in possession of the truth at last, but with a sickening taste in his mouth and a fantastic horror at his heart. One decent, expiatory course lay open to him, he considered it. Tonight, after dinner, he might approach the lady of the pearls and address her in words which he precisely formulated in his mind. "Madame, will you permit an entire stranger to serve you with a word of advice and warning which self-interest prevents others from uttering? Go away. Leave here at once, without delay, with Tadzio and your daughters. Venice is in the grip of pestilence." Then might he lay his hand in farewell upon the head of that instrument of a mocking deity, and thereafter himself flee the accursed morass. But he knew that he was far indeed from any serious desire to take such a step. It would restore him would give him back himself once more, but he who is beside himself revolts at the idea of self-possession. There crossed his mind the vision of a white building with inscriptions on it, glittering in the sinking sun—he recalled how his mind had dreamed away into their transparent mysticism,

recalled the strange pilgrim apparition that had wakened in the aging man a lust for strange countries and fresh sights. And these memories, again, brought in their train the thought of returning home, returning to reason, self-mastery, an ordered existence, to the old life of effort. Alas! the bare thought made him wince with a revulsion that was like physical nausea. "It must be kept quiet," he whispered fiercely. "I will not speak!" The knowledge that he shared the city's secret, the city's guilt—it put him beside himself, intoxicated him as a small quantity of wine will a man suffering from brain-fag. His thoughts dwelt upon the image of the desolate and calamitous city, and he was giddy with fugitive, mad, unreasoning hopes and visions of monstrous sweetness. That tender sentiment he had a moment ago evoked, what was it compared with such images as these? His art, his moral sense, what were they in the balance beside the boons that chaos might confer? He kept silence, he stopped on.

That night he had a fearful dream—if dream be the right word for a mental and physical experience which did indeed befall him in deep sleep, as a thing quite apart and real to his senses, yet without his seeing himself as present in it. Rather its theatre seemed to be his own soul, and the events burst in from outside, violently overcoming the profound resistance of his spirit, passed him through and left him, left the whole cultural structure of a lifetime trampled on, ravaged, and destroyed.

The beginning was fear, fear and desire, with a shuddering curiosity. Night reigned, and his senses were on the alert, he heard loud, confused noises from far away, clamour and hubbub. There was a rattling, a crashing, a low dull thunder, shrill halloos and a kind of howl with a long-drawn *u*-sound at the end. And with all these, dominating them all, flute-notes of the cruellest sweetness, deep and cooing, keeping shamelessly on until the listener felt his very entrails bewitched. He heard a voice, naming, though darkly, that which was to come. "The stranger god!" A glow lighted up the surrounding mist and by it he recognized a mountain scene like that about his country home. From the wooded heights, from among the tree-trunks and crumbling moss-covered rocks, a troop came tumbling and raging down, a whirling rout of men and animals, and overflowed the hillside with flames and human forms, with clamour and the reeling dance. The females stumbled over the long, hurry pelts that dangled from their girdles, with heads flung back they uttered loud hoarse cries and shook their tambourines high in air, brandished naked daggers or torches vomiting trails of sparks. They shrieked, holding their breasts in both hands, coiling snakes with quivering tongues they clutched about their waists. Horned and hairy males, girt about the loins with hides, drooped heads and lifted arms and thighs in unison, as they beat on brazen vessels that gave out droning thunder, or thumped madly on drums. There were troops of beardless youths armed with garlanded staves, these ran after goats and thrust their staves against the creatures' flanks, then clung to the plunging horns and let themselves be borne off with triumphant shouts. And one and all the mad rout yelled that cry, composed of soft consonants with a long-drawn *u*-sound at the end, so sweet and wild it was together, and like nothing ever heard before! It would

ring through the air like the bellow of a challenging stag, and be given back many-tongued, or they would use it to goad each other on to dance with wild excess of tossing limbs—they never let it die. But the deep, beguiling notes of the flute wove in and out and over all. Beguiling too it was to him who struggled in the grip of these sights and sounds, shamelessly awaiting the coming feast and the uttermost surrender. He trembled, he shrank, his will was steadfast to preserve and uphold his own god against this stranger who was sworn enemy to dignity and self-control. But the mountain wall took up the noise and howling and gave it back manifold, it rose high, swelled to a madness that carried him away. His senses reeled in the steam of panting bodies, the acrid stench from the goats, the odour as of stagnant waters—and another, too familiar smell—of wounds, uncleanness, and disease. His heart throbbed to the drums, his brain reeled, a blind rage seized him, a whirling lust, he craved with all his soul to join the ring that formed about the obscene symbol of the godhead, which they were unveiling and elevating, monstrous and wooden, while from full throats they yelled their rallying-cry. Foam dripped from their lips, they drove each other on with lewd gesturings and beckoning hands. They laughed, they howled, they thrust their pointed staves into each other's flesh and licked the blood as it ran down. But now the dreamer was in them and of them, the stranger god was his own. Yes, it was he who was flinging himself upon the animals, who bit and tore and swallowed smoking gobbets of flesh—while on the trampled moss there now began the rites in honour of the god, an orgy of promiscuous embraces—and in his very soul he tasted the bestial degradation of his fall.

The unhappy man woke from this dream shattered, unhinged, powerless in the demon's grip. He no longer avoided men's eyes nor cared whether he exposed himself to suspicion. And anyhow, people were leaving, many of the bathing-cabins stood empty, there were many vacant places in the dining-room, scarcely any foreigners were seen in the streets. The truth seemed to have leaked out, despite all efforts to the contrary, panic was in the air. But the lady of the pearls stopped on with her family, whether because the rumours had not reached her or because she was too proud and fearless to heed them. Tadzio remained, and it seemed at times to Aschenbach, in his obsessed state, that death and fear together might clear the island of all other souls and leave him there alone with him he coveted. In the long mornings on the beach his heavy gaze would rest, a fixed and reckless stare, upon the lad, towards nightfall, lost to shame, he would follow him through the city's narrow streets where horrid death stalked too, and at such time it seemed to him as though the moral law were fallen in ruins and only the monstrous and perverse held out a hope.

Like any lover, he desired to please, suffered agonies at the thought of failure and brightened his dress with smart ties and handkerchiefs and other youthful touches. He added jewellery and perfumes and spent hours each day over his toilette, appearing at dinner elaborately arrayed and tensely excited. The presence of the youthful beauty that had bewitched him filled him with disgust of his own aging body, the sight of his own sharp features and grey hair plunged him in hopeless mortification.



he made desperate efforts to recover the appearance and freshness of his youth and began paying frequent visits to the hotel barber. Enveloped in the white sheet, beneath the hands of that garrulous personage, he would lean back in the chair and look at himself in the glass with misgiving.

"Grey," he said, with a grimace.

"Slightly," answered the man. "Entirely due to neglect, to a lack of regard for appearances. Very natural, of course, in men of affairs, but, after all, not very sensible, for it is just such people who ought to be above vulgar prejudice in matters like these. Some folk have very strict ideas about the use of cosmetics, but they never extend them to the teeth as they logically should. And very disgusted other people would be if they did. No, we are all as old as we feel, but no older, and grey hair can misrepresent a man worse than dyed. You, for instance, signore, have a right to your natural colour. Surely you will permit me to restore what belongs to you?"

"How?" asked Aschenbach.

For answer the only one washed his client's hair in two waters, one clear and one dark, and lo, it was as black as in the days of his youth. He waved it with the tongs in wide, flat undulations, and stepped back to admire the effect.

"Now if we were just to freshen up the skin a little," he said.

And with that he went on from one thing to another, his enthusiasm waxing with each new idea. Aschenbach sat there comfortably; he was incapable of objecting to the process—rather as it went forward it roused his hopes. He watched it in the mirror and saw his eyebrows grow more even and arching, the eyes gain in size and brilliance, by dint of a little application below the lids. A delicate carmine glowed on his cheeks where the skin had been so brown and leathery. The dry, anæmic lips grew full, they turned the colour of ripe strawberries, the lines round eyes and mouth were treated with a facial cream and gave place to youthful bloom. It was a young man who looked back at him from the glass—Aschenbach's heart leaped at the sight. The artist in cosmetic at last professed himself satisfied, after the manner of such people, he thanked his client profusely for what he had done himself. "The merest trifle, the merest, signore," he said as he added the final touches. "Now the signore can fall in love as soon as he likes." Aschenbach went off as in a dream, dazed between joy and fear, in his red neck-tie and broad straw hat with its gay striped band.

A lukewarm storm-wind had come up. It rained a little now and then; the air was heavy and turbid and smelt of decay. Aschenbach, with fevered cheeks beneath the rouge, seemed to hear rushing and flapping sounds in his ears, as though storm-spirits were abroad—unhallowed ocean harpies who follow those devoted to destruction, snatch away and defile their viands. For the heat took away his appetite and thus he was haunted with the idea that his food was infected.

One afternoon he pursued his charmer deep into the stricken city's huddled heart. The labyrinthine little streets, squares, canals, and bridges, each one so like the next, at length quite made him lose his bearings.

He did not even know the points of the compass, all his care was not to lose sight of the figure after which his eyes thirsted. He slunk under walls, he lurked behind buildings or people's backs, and the sustained tension of his senses and emotions exhausted him more and more, though for a long time he was unconscious of fatigue. Tadzio walked behind the others, he let them pass ahead in the narrow alleys, and as he sauntered slowly after, he would turn his head and assure himself with a glance of his strange, twilight grey eyes that his lover was still following. He saw him—and he did not betray him. The knowledge enraptured Aschenbach. Lured by those eyes, led on the leading-string of his own passion and folly, utterly lovesick, he stole upon the footsteps of his unseemly hope—and at the end found himself cheated. The Polish family crossed a small vaulted bridge, the height of whose archway hid them from his sight, and when he climbed it himself they were nowhere to be seen. He hunted in three directions—straight ahead and on both sides the narrow, dirty quay—in vain. Worn quite out and unnerved, he had to give over the search.

His head burned, his body was wet with clammy sweat, he was plagued by intolerable thirst. He looked about for refreshment, of whatever sort, and found a little fruit-shop where he bought some strawberries. They were overripe and soft, he ate them as he went. The street he was on opened out into a little square, one of those charmed, forsaken spots he liked, he recognized it as the very one where he had sat weeks ago and conceived his abortive plan of flight. He sank down on the steps of the well and leaned his head against its stone rim. It was quiet here. Grass grew between the stones, and rubbish lay about. Tall, weather-beaten houses bordered the square, one of them rather palatial, with vaulted windows, gaping now, and little lion balconies. In the ground floor of another was an apothecary's shop. A waft of carbolic acid was borne on a warm gust of wind.

There he sat, the master—this was he who had found a way to reconcile art and honours, who had written *The Abject*, and in a style of classic purity renounced bohemianism and all its works, all sympathy with the abyss and the troubled depths of the outcast human soul. This was he who had put knowledge underfoot to climb so high, who had outgrown the ironic pose and adjusted himself to the burdens and obligations of fame, whose renown had been officially recognized and his name ennobled, whose style was set for a model in the schools. There he sat. His eyelids were closed, there was only a swift, sidelong glint of the eyeballs now and again, something between a question and a leer, while the rouged and flabby mouth uttered single words of the sentences shaped in his disordered brain by the fantastic logic that governs our dreams.

'For mark you, Phædrus, beauty alone is both divine and visible, and so it is the sense way, the artist's way, little Phædrus, to the spirit. But, now tell me, my dear boy, do you believe that such a man can ever attain wisdom and true manly worth, for whom the path to the spirit must lead through the senses? Or do you rather think—for I leave the point to you—that it is a path of perilous sweetness, a way of transgression, and must surely lead him who walks in it astray? For you know

that we poets cannot walk the way of beauty without Eros as our companion and guide. We may be heroic after our fashion, disciplined warriors of our craft, yet are we all like women, for we exult in passion, and love is still our desire—our craving and our shame. And from this you will perceive that we poets can be neither wise nor worthy citizens. We must needs be wanton, must needs rove at large in the realm of feeling. Our magisterial style is all folly and pretence, our honourable repute a farce, the crowd's belief in us is merely laughable. And to teach youth, or the populace, by means of art is a dangerous practice and ought to be forbidden. For what good can an artist be as a teacher, when from his birth up he is headed direct for the pit? We may want to shun it and attain to honour in the world, but however we turn, it draws us still. So, then, since knowledge might destroy us, we will have none of it. For knowledge, Phædrus, does not make him who possesses it dignified or austere. Knowledge is all-knowing, understanding, forgiving, it takes up no position, sets no store by form. It has compassion with the abyss—it *is* the abyss. So we reject it, firmly, and henceforward our concern shall be with beauty alone. And by beauty we mean simplicity, largeness, and renewed severity of discipline, we mean a return to detachment and to form. But detachment, Phædrus, and preoccupation with form lead to intoxication and desire, they may lead the noblest among us to frightful emotional excesses, which his own stern cult of the beautiful would make him the first to condemn. So they too, they too, lead to the bottomless pit. Yes, they lead us thither, I say, us who are poets—who by our natures are prone not to excellence but to excess. And now, Phædrus, I will go. Remain here, and only when you can no longer see me, then do you depart also.”

A few days later Gustave Aschenbach left his hotel rather later than usual in the morning. He was not feeling well and had to struggle against spells of giddiness only half physical in their nature, accompanied by a swiftly mounting dread, a sense of futility and hopelessness—but whether this referred to himself or to the outer world he could not tell. In the lobby he saw a quantity of luggage lying strapped and ready, asked the porter whose it was, and received in answer the name he already knew he should hear—that of the Polish family. The expression of his ravaged features did not change, he only gave that quick lift of the head with which we sometimes receive the uninteresting answer to a casual query. But he put another “When?” “After luncheon,” the man replied. He nodded, and went down to the beach.

It was an unfriendly scene. Little crisping shivers ran all across the wide stretch of shallow water between the shore and the first sand-bank. The whole beach, once so full of colour and life, looked now autumnal, out of season, it was nearly deserted and not even very clean. A camera on a tripod stood at the edge of the water, apparently abandoned, its black cloth snapped in the-freshening wind.

Tadzio was there, in front of his cabin, with the three or four play-fellows still left him. Aschenbach set up his chair some half-way between the cabins and the water, spread a rug over his knees, and sat

looking on. The game this time was unsupervised, the elders being probably busy with their packing, and it looked rather lawless and out-of-hand. Jaschui, the sturdy lad in the belted suit, with the black, brilliantined hair, became angry at a handful of sand thrown in his eyes, he challenged Tadzio to a fight, which quickly ended in the downfall of the weaker. And perhaps the coarser nature saw here a chance to avenge himself at last, by one cruel act, for his long weeks of subserviency the victor would not let the vanquished get up, but remained kneeling on Tadzio's back, pressing Tadzio's face into the sand—for so long a time that it seemed the exhausted lad might even suffocate. He made spasmodic efforts to shake the other off, lay still, and then began a feeble twitching. Just as Aschenbach was about to spring indignantly to the rescue, Jaschui let his victim go. Tadzio, very pale, half sat up, and remained so, leaning on one arm, for several minutes, with darkening eyes and rumpled hair. Then he rose and walked slowly away. The others called him, at first gaily, then imploringly, he would not hear. Jaschui was evidently overtaken by swift remorse, he followed his friend and tried to make his peace, but Tadzio motioned him back with a jerk of one shoulder and went down to the water's edge. He was barefoot and wore his striped linen suit with the red breast-knot.

There he stayed a little, with bent head, tracing figures in the wet sand with one toe, then stepped into the shallow water, which at its deepest did not wet his knees, waded idly through it and reached the sand-bar. Now he paused again, with his face turned seaward, and next began to move slowly leftwards along the narrow strip of sand the sea left bare. He paced there, divided by an expanse of water from the shore, from his mates by his moody pride, a remote and isolated figure, with floating locks, out there in sea and wind, against the misty inane. Once more he paused to look, with a sudden recollection, or by an impulse, he turned from the waist up, in an exquisite movement, one hand resting on his hip, and looked over his shoulder at the shore. The watcher sat just as he had sat that time in the lobby of the hotel when first the twilight grey eyes had met his own. He rested his head against the chair-back and followed the movements of the figure out there, then lifted it, as it were in answer to Tadzio's gaze. It sank on his breast, the eyes looked out beneath their lids, while his whole face took on the relaxed and brooding expression of deep slumber. It seemed to him the pale and lovely Summoner out there smiled at him and beckoned, as though, with the hand he lifted from his hip, he pointed outward as he hovered on before into an immensity of richest expectation.

Some minutes passed before anyone hastened to the aid of the elderly man sitting there collapsed in his chair. They bore him to his room. And before nightfall a shocked and respectful world received the news of his decease.



# Appendix



## "THE GOLDEN HONEYMOON"

### *Critical Comments*

Lardner's subtlest story      When this was first published, most readers thought it very touching, even a trifle sentimental—this account of an old couple's wedding-anniversary trip to Florida, their little quarrels, their small-town complacencies, their petty satisfactions. Actually it is one of the most smashing indictments of a "happy marriage" ever written, composed with a fury so gelid as to hide completely the bitter passion seething beneath every line. Under the level of homey sentiment lies a terrific contempt for this quarrelsome, vain, literal old couple who for fifty years have disliked life and each other without ever having had the courage or the imagination to face the reality of their own meanness (Clifton Fadiman)

Clifton Fadiman    Ring Lardner and the Triangle of Hate, *The Nation* CXXXVI (March 22 1933) p 316 Used by permission of the publisher

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Fifty years of suffering for two married couples because no one of the four persons concerned had sense enough to bring about the sensible coupling (Vernon Loggins)

Vernon Loggins *I Hear America* (New York Thomas Y Crowell Company 1927) p 299 Used by permission of the publisher

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Has any other living [in 1925] American ever written a better story than 'The Golden Honeymoon'? There is more of sheer reality in such a story      than in the whole canon of Henry James, and there is also, I believe, more expert craftsmanship (H L Mencken)

H L Mencken    Hiring a Hall *New York World* May 31 1925 Used by permission of Jackson Nash Brophy Barringer and Brooks authorized on behalf of the publisher

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that tender, pathetic comedy of futility      a masterpiece of implication (Burton Rascoe)

Burton Rascoe *A Bookman's Daybook* (New York Liveright Publishers) p 251 Copyright renewed 1956, by Mrs Hazel L Rascoe



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one of the deepest manifestations of sheer world despair since "The City of Dreadful Night" (William Bolitho)

William Bolitho Ring Lardner *New York World* March 27 1930  
Used by permission of Jackson Nash Brophy Barringer & Brooks authorized on behalf of the publisher

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Such people as the old man and Mother must remain blissfully unaware of what they have contributed to the pessimism of mankind, because, whatever gelid fury and bitter passion Ring concealed so successfully the old folks have quite a good time at horseshoes, watching the timetable, haggling over prices at restaurants, and enjoying a resurgence of youthful jealousy that has survived half a century of marital drabness. Their complacency is harmless, their irritability only standard human equipment, their sentimentality is normal for their age, there is no sign that they have disliked life or each other at all, and they have the kind of "happy marriage" which smashing indictments don't smash. If Ring had meant anything other than this, he would have contrived to get it into the story. By this time he knew pretty well what he was doing. The old couple are rather amiable bores, compared to other married couples in Ring's stories, they are utterly blessed (Donald Elder)

From *Ring Lardner* by Donald Elder Copyright 1956 by Donald Elder p 211 Reprinted by permission of Doubleday and Company Inc

### "LIGEIA"

#### *Critical Comments*

In "Ligeia" the human will storms the gates of death and holds them open, even if only for a brief moment, at the command of a woman's love, not only for her husband, but also for life itself (Arthur Hobson Quinn)

Arthur Hobson Quinn *Edgar Allan Poe A Critical Biography* (New York D Appleton Century Crofts Inc 1941) p 269 Used by permission of the publisher

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Ligeia is "a woman of superhuman will, and her husband, a man of ordinary powers" (Clayton Hamilton)

Clayton Hamilton *A Manual of the Art of Fiction* (New York: The Odyssey Press Inc. 1928) p. 196. Used by permission of the publisher.

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These assumptions [of Hamilton] ignore the obvious context with its emphasis on the hero's obsession, madness, and hallucination. Actually, the story seems both aesthetically and psychologically more intelligible as a tale, not of supernatural, but rather of entirely natural, though highly phrenetic, psychological phenomena. [The hero] is presented in the first paragraph as a man with an erotic obsession of long standing, his wife is presumably dead, but his idolatrous devotion to her has kept her physical beauty and her personality painfully alive in his every thought. This devotion approaches monomania.

In following all that the hero says, the reader must keep constantly in mind that, if the hero is suffering from obsession, his narrative cannot be accepted merely at its face value as authentic of all the facts, and he must remember that incidents and circumstances have a primary significance in terms of the hero's mania which is often at variance with the significance which the hero believes and means to convey.

Hence the important elements in the hero's description of Ligeia are of primary significance as they reveal his feeling of psychic inadequacy, his voluptuous imagination, and his megalomania and fierce obsession with the idea that by power of will man may thwart death through spiritual love. Likewise, the narrative of the circumstances of Ligeia's death is of significance, not merely as it reveals her love of life and her struggle to live, but as it reveals the psychological crisis in which the hero's psychic shock and frustration bring on final and complete mania, the diagnostic fallacy of which is that his will is omnipotent and can bring Ligeia back to life. Up to the point of her death the hero's obsession has taken the form of adoration and worship of her person in an erotomania primarily sensual (though frustrated by a psychic flaw which he is aware of but does not understand) and hence projected into a symbolic realm of deity and forbidden wisdom. Following her death, however, his obsession becomes an intense megalomania motivated by his will to restore her to life in another body through a process of metempsychosis. (Roy P. Basler)

Roy P. Basler *See Symbolism and Psychology in Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1948) pp. 144, 145, 149, 150. Used by permission of the publisher.

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*Ligeia* is Poe's love-story, and its very fantasy makes it more truly his own story.

## CRITICAL COMMENTS

It is a tale of love pushed over a verge And love pushed to extremes  
is a battle of wills between the lovers

Love is become a battle of wills

Which shall first destroy the other, of the lovers? Which can hold out longest, against the other?

Ligeia is still the old-fashioned woman Her will is still to submit She wills to submit to the vampire of her husband's consciousness Even death

Poe has been so praised for his style But it seems to me a meretricious affair "Her marble hand" and "the elasticity of her footfall" seem more like chair-springs and mantel-pieces than a human creature She never was quite a human creature to him She was an instrument, from which he got his extremes of sensation His machine *a plaisir*, as somebody says

All Poe's style, moreover, has this mechanical quality, as his poetry has a mechanical rhythm He never sees anything in terms of life, almost always in terms of matter, jewels, marble, etc—or in terms of force, scientific And his cadences are all managed mechanically This is what is called "having a style"

What he wants to do with Ligeia is to analyse her, till he knows all her component parts, till he has got her all in his consciousness She is some strange chemical salt which he must analyse out in the test-tubes of his brain, and then—when he's finished the analysis—*E finita la commedia!*

But she won't be quite analysed out There is something something he can't get Writing of her eyes, he says, "They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our race"—as if anybody would want eyes far larger" than other folks' "They were even fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of Nourjahad" Which is blarney "The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black and, far over them, hung jetty lashes of great length"—Suggests a whiplash "The brows, slightly irregular in outline, had the same tint The *strangeness* which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the colour, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to as the *expression* —Sounds like an anatomist anatomizing a cat—"Ah word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual The expression of the eyes of Ligeia! How for long hours have I pondered upon it! How have I, through the whole of a midsummer night, struggled to fathom it! What was it—that something more profound than the well of Democritus—which lay far within the pupils of my beloved? What *was* it? I was possessed with a passion to discover"

It is easy to see why each man kills the thing he loves To *know* a living thing is to kill it You have to kill a thing to know it satisfactorily For this reason, the desirous consciousness, the SPIRIT, is a vampire

One should be sufficiently intelligent and interested to know a good deal *about* any person one comes into close contact with *About* her Or *about* him

But to try to *know* any living being is to try to suck the life out of that being

Above all things, with the woman one loves Every sacred instinct teaches one that one must leave her unknown You know your woman darkly, in the blood To try to *know* her mentally is to try to kill her Beware, oh woman, of the man who wants to find out *what you are* And, oh men, beware a thousand times more of the woman who wants to *know* you or *get* you, what you are

Keep *knowledge* for the world of matter, force, and function It has got nothing to do with being

But Poe wanted to know—wanted to know what was the strangeness in the eyes of Ligeia She might have told him it was horror at his probing, horror at being vamped by his consciousness

But she wanted to be vamped She wanted to be probed by his consciousness, to be KNOWN She paid for wanting it, too

Now Poe and Ligeia, alas, couldn't laugh They were frenziedly earnest And frenziedly they pushed on this vibration of consciousness and unison in consciousness They sinned against the Holy Ghost that bids us all laugh and forget, bids us know our own limits And they weren't forgiven

It is a ghostly story of the assertion of the human will, the will-to-love and the will-to-consciousness, asserted against death itself The pride of human conceit in KNOWLEDGE

There are terrible spirits, ghosts, in the air of America (D H Lawrence)

Excerpt from *Studies in Classic American Literature* by D H Lawrence Copyright 1923 by Thomas Seltzer Inc Copyright 1951 by Frieda Lawrence Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press Inc New York

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The loftiest kind [of story] is that of the highest imagination—and for this reason only "Ligeia" may be called my best tale (Poe, from a letter)

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## "MADAME TELLIER'S EXCURSION"

### *Critical Comments*

His [Maupassant's] is certainly one of the sanest and healthiest temperaments of the younger generation People will ask, 'Why choose such subjects? Can't writers write about respectable people?' Of course

But I think Maupassant chose this subject because he felt that it struck a very human note (Emile Zola)

I can only beg you [Maupassant] to increase the range of your observation. You portray peasants, the lower middle class, workers, students and prostitutes. Some day you will doubtless portray the cultivated classes, the upper bourgeoisie, engineers, physicians, professors, big industrialists and men of business. In my opinion, civilization is an asset, a man born into comfortable surroundings, the product of three or four honest, industrious and respectable generations, has a greater chance of being upright, refined and educated. Honor and intelligence are always more or less hot-house plants. This theory is certainly aristocratic, but it is based on experience, and I shall be happy when you devote your talent to men and women who, thanks to their culture and fine feelings, are the honor and the strength of their country (H. Taine)

From the first story in *La Maison Tellier* despite the unseemliness and the vacuousness of the subject-matter, I could not deny that the author possessed what is called talent. But the little volume was unhappily lacking the chief of three conditions which, in addition to talent, are indispensable to any work of art. These are: 1, a normal relationship, that is, a moral relationship, between the author and his subject; 2, clarity of exposition or beauty of form, which are one and the same; and 3, sincerity, that is, a real feeling of love or hatred for what the artist depicts. Of these three conditions, Maupassant possessed only the last two. He was completely devoid of the first (Leo Tolstoy)

Francis Steegmuller *Maupassant: A Lion in the Path* (New York: Random House 1949) pp. 155 and 287. Quoted from Steegmuller pp. 288 and 404. Quotations from Zola, Taine, and Tolstoy used by permission of the publisher.

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Not less powerful is his visual sense, the quick, direct discrimination of his eyes, which explains the singularly vivid concision of his descriptions. These are never prolonged nor analytic, have nothing of enumeration of the quality of the observer, who counts the items to be sure he has made up the sum. His eye *selects* unerringly, unscrupulously, almost impudently—catches the particular thing in which the character of the object or the scene resides, and, by expressing it with the artful brevity of a master, leaves a convincing, original picture. If he is inveterately synthetic, he is never more so than in the way he brings this hard, short, intelligent gaze to bear. His vision of the world is for the most part a vision of ugliness, and even when it is not, there is in his easy power to generalize

a certain absence of love, a sort of bird's-eye-view contempt He regards the analytic fashion of telling a story as very much less profitable than the simple epic manner which "avoids with care all complicated explanations, all dissertations upon motives, and confines itself to making persons and events pass before our eyes" M de Maupassant adds that in his view "psychology should be hidden in a book, as it is hidden in reality under the facts of existence The novel conceived in this manner gains interest, movement, colour, the bustle of life" (Henry James)

Henry James *Partial Portraits* (London Macmillan 1888) pp 251  
254 Used by permission of John Farquharson Ltd on behalf of the Estate  
of the late Henry James

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To him [Maupassant] words and humanity were a kind of aphrodisiac, stimulating rapid cycles of creative passion This tendency of his, working unchecked by others, might have resulted in a tenth-rate sex-romanticist Fortunately it was checked by others It was checked by the two things which combine perhaps more than any others to prevent a writer from attaining the junk status of two-penny-library popularity remorseless clarity of vision and equally remorseless integrity of mind Whatever else stimulated Maupassant, these forces governed him They struck out of his finest work any possibility of fake, but equally they removed from it any possibility of moral attitude Maupassant, of course, has been stigmatized by successive generations of the straitlaced as highly immoral But in fact he was amoral, and that fact alone kept him from entering the most palatial spaces of popular approval and acceptance (H E Bates)

H E Bates *The Modern Short Story A Critical Survey* (Edinburgh Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd 1941), p 94

## YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN

### *Critical Comments*

"Young Goodman Brown" is the greatest of Hawthorne's stories It is a parable into which one can read several meanings, but the chief of them is that a young man conscious of his own guilt may suddenly find himself in a vast confraternity of the damned "Evil is the nature of mankind," Satan tells the good man and his wife as they stand before an unholy altar "Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race" (Malcolm Cowley)

Malcolm Cowley ed *The Portable Hawthorne* (New York The Viking Press 1948), p 28 Used by permission of the publisher

When he [Hawthorne] was lightest at heart, he was most creative, and when he was most creative, the moral picturesqueness of the old secret of mankind in general and of the Puritans in particular most appealed to him—the secret that we are really not by any means so good as a well-regulated society requires us to appear. It is not too much to say, even, that the very condition of production of some of these unamiable tales would be that they should be superficial, and, as it were, insincere. The magnificent little romance of “Young Goodman Brown,” for instance, evidently means nothing as regards Hawthorne’s own state of mind, his conviction of human depravity and his constant melancholy, for the simple reason that if it meant anything, it would mean too much. Mr. Lathrop speaks of it as a “terrible and lurid parable”, but this, it seems to me, is just what it is not. It is not a parable, but a picture, which is a very different thing. (Henry James)

Henry James *Hawthorne* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1879)  
p. 99. Used by permission of John Farquharson Ltd. on behalf of the  
Estate of the late Henry James

Nothing that Hawthorne wrote came from a deeper source—not even *The Scarlet Letter*, in whose pages it lives again. It is one of the world’s great tales, and for a more serious reason than Henry James supposed. James, who thought it a “magnificent little romance,” hastened to deny its depth, for he was committed to the theory that Hawthorne had only an aesthetic interest in evil, so that “Young Goodman Brown,” for instance, must be “not a parable but a picture.” It is a perfect picture, and hence needs to have no more meaning than one wishes to think it has. If it is a parable, it is perfect too, for no statement of its meaning could be as short as it is, or as interesting. It “evidently means nothing,” James insists, “as regards Hawthorne’s own state of mind, his conviction of human depravity and his consequent melancholy, for the simple reason that, if it meant anything, it would mean too much.” Too much, that is, for Henry James. “Young Goodman Brown” means exactly what it says, namely that its hero left his pretty wife one evening—left her with the wind playing among the pink ribbons at her head—to walk by himself in the primitive New England woods, the Devil’s territory where black anthems made nightly music, and either to dream or actually to experience (Hawthorne will not say) the discovery that evil exists in every human heart. The older man whom he soon meets, and who looks something like his father, has “an indescribable air of one who knew the world.” He is the Devil, walking there with Goodman Brown—or is it but a dream?—to waken in his soul the consciousness of sin, his own and every other person’s. The shadow of sin falls upon his ancestors who persecuted Quakers and

murdered Indians in mass, upon saintly elders who still live, and finally upon Faith

Few things in fiction are more startling, or more important, than this pink ribbon. Is it there, or is it only dreamed? If it is there, what explanation can there be save the one young Brown accepts? The Devil exists, and Faith has become one of his converts. All three answers come at once, in a texture of fact and implication which Hawthorne has woven as closely as life is woven. The ribbon may not be there, but in that case this is no ordinary dream, no nightmare which will be gone tomorrow. For Brown is changed. He thinks there is no good on earth, "and sin is but a name."

He has stumbled upon the "mystery of sin" which, rightly understood, provides the only sane and cheerful view of life there is. Understood in Brown's fashion, it darkens and sours the world, withering hope and charity, and perverting whatever is truly good until it looks like evil at its worst—like blasphemy and hypocrisy. "Young Goodman Brown" is not a statement, it is a story. It is so good a story that readers of it must rarely be tempted to decide what it means. But it means so much because it is so good a story, because the pink ribbon, mentioned several times near the beginning, is not mentioned again until it falls out of the sky, because the sounds of this special world are so brilliantly, so heartbreakingly orchestrated, because the hum of a supernatural energy is authentic from beginning to end, because, in short, Hawthorne neglected no triumph of his art in the service of whatever idea it was that possessed him. (Mark Van Doren)

From *Nathaniel Hawthorne* by Mark Van Doren. Copyright 1949, by William Sloane Associates, Inc. pp. 76-79. Used by permission of William Sloane Associates, Inc.

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Hawthorne's main concern with this material is to use it to develop the theme that mere doubt of the existence of good, the thought that all other men are evil, can become such a corrosive force as to eat out the life of the heart. In handling the question of what the young man really saw during his night in the forest, Hawthorne's imagination is at its most delicately masterful. As long as what Brown saw is left wholly in the realm of hallucination, Hawthorne's created illusion is compelling. For the symbolical truth of what the young man had conjured up in his bewildered vision is heightened by the fact that when he staggered against one of the burning trees, its twigs were cold with dew. The dramatization of his spiritual loss in the form of the agonized struggle and disappearance of his wife allows the description of the inner experience to become concrete, and also doubles its application. Only the literal insistence on that damaging pink ribbon obtrudes the labels of a confining allegory, and short-circuits the range of association. (F. O. Matthiessen)

F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 283-284. Used by permission of the publisher.



Young Goodman Brown did not lose his faith (we are even told that his Faith survived him), he learned its full and terrible significance. This story is Hawthorne's criticism of the teachings of Puritanic Calvinism. His implication is that the doctrine of the elect and damned is not a faith which carries man heavenward on its skirts, as Brown once believed, but, instead, condemns him to hell—bad and good alike indiscriminately—and for all intents and purposes so few escape as to make man's chance of salvation almost disappear. It is this awakening to the full meaning of his faith which causes Young Goodman Brown to look upon his minister as a blasphemer for he has learned that according to the truths of his faith there is probably nothing but "misery unutterable" in store for him and all his congregation, it is this awakening which causes him to turn away from prayer, it is this awakening which makes appropriate the fact that "they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone" (Thomas E Connolly)

Thomas E Connolly Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown An Attack on Puritanic Calvinism *American Literature* XXVIII No. 3 (November 1956) p. 375 Used by permission of the publisher

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In "Young Goodman Brown," one of his best stories Hawthorne is dealing with his favorite theme—the unhappiness which the human heart suffers as the result of its innate depravity. The dramatic impact would have been stronger if Hawthorne had let the incidents tell their own story. Goodman Brown's behavior to his neighbors and finally to his wife shows us that he is a changed man. But Hawthorne's weakness for moralizing and his insufficient technical equipment betray him into the anticlimax of the last paragraph.

Brown was willing to lend his own soul to the Devil for a night but he cannot face the discovery that every other soul has a similar desire and having lost his faith to the Devil, comes to hate his fellow man. (Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate)

Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate *The House of Fiction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1950) pp. 38-39 Used by permission of the publisher

## "THE JUDGMENT"

### *Critical Comments*

The quarrel between the religious and the psychoanalytic interpreters of Kafka is of no great moment, as his work is sufficiently meaningful to

support some of the "truths" of both schools. Thus the father who condemns his son to death by drowning (in *The Judgment*) can be understood as the tyrannical father of Freudian lore and at the same time as the God of Judgment rising in His wrath to destroy man's illusion of self-sufficiency in the world. At bottom there is no conflict between the two interpretations. For one thing, they are not really mutually exclusive, for another, the reading we give the story depends as much on our own outlook—within certain limits, of course—as on that of the author. There was in Kafka's character an element of radical humility not permitting him to set out to "prove" any given attitude toward life or idea about it. This he plainly tells us in some of the aphorisms that he wrote about himself in the third person: "He proves nothing but himself, his sole proof is himself, all his opponents overcome him at once, not by refuting him (he is irrefutable) but by proving themselves" (Philip Rahv).

*Selected Stories of Franz Kafka* Introduction by Philip Rahv (New York: The Modern Library Random House) pp. xiii-xiv. Used by permission of Random House Inc. and Schocken Books Inc.

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The assumptions and the plot of the story are not guilt and atonement, but fatuity and destruction. As a punishment for an established guilt, the judgment is absurd. But as a "judgment," it is something more comprehensive: it qualifies the whole of George's self-confident existence as nothingness, and that on no other grounds than that of this empty self-confidence. In his relations with his distant friend no kind of malice is expressed, nothing but this self-confidence that even knows what is good for everyone. George lives in falsehood, but it is only in the uneasiness of his reflections about his friend that he feels a slight consciousness of this. His first step toward truth destroys him. The father rises as the friend's advocate: "'For years I have been waiting for you to come with some such question! Do you think I concern myself with anything else? Do you think I read the papers? Look!'" And he threw George a paper that had somehow found its way into the bed. An old newspaper, with a name entirely unknown to George." The outward, historical events which newspapers record, and in which George's existence also moves, mean nothing to the father. He belongs to a different sphere, from whose existence George is entirely withdrawn, and of which he is aware only in suppressed stirrings. The struggle between father and son develops into a struggle between two worlds: that of the vital existence, in which probability and reservation rule, and conscience is relegated to the position of watchdog of a drugged smugness, and that other world in which each step has an incalculable importance, because it is taken under the horizon of an absolute summons to the right road. The father is the authoritative bearer of this summons—an aspect of God.

For God, beyond question, plays in our existence the role of a man once powerful, but now come down in life and neglected, to whom a

certain measure of reverence and attention is paid, but who has nothing more to say in our "affairs"—particularly since the death of "mother"—the decay of the church, the Synagogue, religion in general. Man is autonomous in his decisions, and takes the world on self-confidently—just as George does his fiancée. From the point of view of this human autonomy, the sudden coming to life of God as a complete annulment of the might of man is absurd. But the man who just lives a life without principles cannot evade this madness of God when it suddenly becomes actual. He has to listen to his worldliness being presented as randomness—"Because she raised her skirts"—and finally in his unmasked carnalism he has to destroy himself. (Herbert Tauber)

Herbert Tauber *Franz Kafka* (New Haven: Yale University Press)  
p. 15 and pp. 15-17. Used by permission of the publisher.

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*February 11* [1913] While I read the proofs of *The Judgment* I'll write down all the relationships which have become clear to me in the story as far as I now remember them. This is necessary because the story came out of me like a real birth, covered with filth and slime, and only I have the hand that can reach to the body itself and the strength of desire to do so.

The friend is the link between father and son, he is their strongest common bond. Sitting alone at his window, Georg rummages voluptuously in this consciousness of what they have in common, believes he has his father within him and would be at peace with everything if it were not for a fleeting, sad thoughtfulness. In the course of the story the father, with the strengthened position that the other, lesser things they share in common give him—love, devotion to the mother, loyalty to her memory, the clientele that he (the father) had been the first to acquire for the business—uses the common bond of the friend to set himself up as Georg's antagonist. Georg is left with nothing: the bride who lives in the story only in relation to the friend, that is, to what father and son have in common, is easily driven away by the father since no marriage has yet taken place, and so she cannot penetrate the circle of blood relationship that is drawn around father and son. What they have in common is built up entirely around the father, Georg can feel it only as something foreign, something that has become independent that he has never given enough protection, that is exposed to Russian revolutions, and only because he himself has lost everything except his awareness of the father does the judgment, which closes off his father from him completely, have so strong an effect on him.

Georg has the same number of letters as Franz. In Bendemann "mann" is a strengthening of "Bende" to provide for all the as yet unforeseen possibilities in the story. But Bende has exactly the same number of letters as Kafka, and the vowel *e* occurs in the same place as does the vowel *a* in Kafka.

Frieda has as many letters as F and the same initial, Brandenfeld has the same initial as B, and in the word "Feld" a certain connection in meaning as well. Perhaps even the thought of Berlin was not without influence and the recollection of the Mark Brandenburg perhaps had some influence.

*February 12* After I read the story at Weltsch's yesterday, old Mr Weltsch went out and, when he returned after a short time, praised especially the graphic descriptions in the story. With his arm extended he said, "I see this father before me," all the time looking directly at the empty chair in which he had been sitting while I was reading.

My sister said, "It is our house." I was astonished at how mistaken she was in the setting and said, "In that case, then, Father would have to be living in the toilet." (Franz Kafka)

*The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910 1913* (New York Schocken Books), pp. 278 280. Used by permission of the publisher.